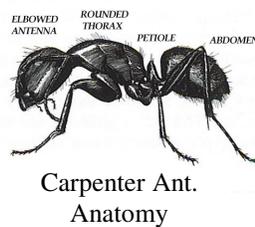


Carpenter Ants

Physical Characteristics:

Carpenter ants are black in color with reddish legs. They are polymorphic, varying in size. The colony consists of Queens, Males, Workers and Majors. The evenly rounded thorax profile and the single petiole located between the thorax and the abdomen distinguishes the carpenter ant from the rest of the ant species. Their antenna is elbowed. When the ant has been feeding you will notice that the abdomen extends, causing a striping effect. Carpenter ants do have the ability to bite.



Habitat:

They dwell in logs, stumps, in ground or even under rocks. Their purpose in our environment is to break down wood, which is a very important element in the balance of our world. Carpenter ants Do Not consume wood. They nest in logs and stumps by excavating the wood, turning it into frass (sawdust) and kicking it out of their way. Frass is the evidence that there is a carpenter ant infestation. This is why railroad ties are a bad idea in landscaping, after all...they are logs cut into beam shape. As you can see by the picture, this log shows frass and the carpenter ants tending to their eggs.

When your home becomes a satellite colony by ants trailing from their parent colony, you may hear a crackling sound within your wall voids similar to that of Rice Crispies in milk. It is not necessary, nor should you, open up a wall void for treatment. The nest does not have to be exposed to kill the colony.



Frass at the base of the tree.



Nest within a live tree.

Biology:

Carpenter ants go dormant during the cold winter months. In the Pacific NW they will usually do their first swarming the first warm day in May. They will do a second swarming sometime around June or July. The males are the first to take flight when the temperature is warm enough. When they don't return to the nest the queens know it is time for flight. It is during flight that the two will mate. After mating the queen will pull off her wings and seek out a nesting area. It takes 100% humidity for her to start her first brood. The males will die after mating due to the fact that they can not take care of themselves. She will raise the first brood and after that her sole purpose is the production of eggs. The new brood will then forage for food to feed the queen and the ever growing nest.

Due to the fact that the queens need 100% humidity, she will not start her nest in your home, unless of course you have a water problem providing that humidity. When a nest gets larger satellite colonies are developed. Ants in a satellite colony will traffic between their original parent colony and the satellite colony. The damage they will do is the same as what you see in logs. Ever notice the logging trucks carrying logs with hollowed out heartwood?

Notice the 3 pieces in the woodpile that have carpenter ant damage.



Carpenter ants are busy tending to the eggs within the log. Notice the frass at the bottom of the picture.