



Carpenter Ants

Carpenter ants invade homes in search of food entering under doors, through holes in screens and eaves or along electrical service wires and pipes. They will eat almost everything humans eat. Sweets, fats, and proteins particularly attract them.

Carpenter ants do not eat wood, termites do. Instead they cut tunnels through wood and then build their nests in it or in the surrounding insulation. Unless they build a nest inside the house, they do not cause any structural damage.

Carpenter ants are large, 1/4 - 3/4 inches in length, dark colored (black), with large jaws. They do not sting, but can nip lightly.

In spring to early summer they develop wings so they can mate. After mating the queens look for a new nest site. Wet, rotting wood is preferred by the ants. The fungus that rots the wood softens the fibers which makes it easier to tunnel into.

Leaky plumbing is usually the cause of damp or rotting wood in a home. Once a nest is established ants will enter into adjoining dry wood. If a nest is suspected in the home try to locate it. Carpenter ants are most active after dark. Observe them carefully, looking for coarse sawdust as in indication of the nest site. Damp areas are the most likely sites for nests.

The following list of possible nest sites will help:

Inside the Home:

- Window & door sills
- Inside walls behind exterior downspouts
- Under leaky roof shingles
- Soffits or walls where gutters overflow
- Below a leaking roof valley
- Under dishwashers, sinks, showers & tubs, washing machines
- Behind ceramic tiled walls above tubs
- Behind water damaged fascia and other exterior trim
- Under chimney and other flashing
- Near air conditioning condensation drain
- In firewood recently brought into the home

Outside the Home:

- Firewood, stumps, and trees
- Untreated wood of: decks, porches, steps and landscape timbers

Control:

Indoor pesticide control of carpenter ants is only necessary if a nest is found in the home. Professional pest control companies should be used to eliminate a nest in the home.

Indoor pesticide applications by non-professionals are not recommended.

Repair leaks and replace rotted wood as needed. Use bait type traps inside the home to control the ants. Apply an insecticide labeled for ants like ***Dursban*** to the *outside* perimeter of the house to control further entry.

For more information about horticulture or the Master Gardener Program in Frederick County, call the Frederick County Office of the Maryland Cooperative Extension, 301- 600-1596, or visit <http://www.frederick.umd.edu/>. Our mission is to educate Maryland residents about safe, effective and sustainable horticultural practices that build healthy gardens, landscapes and communities.