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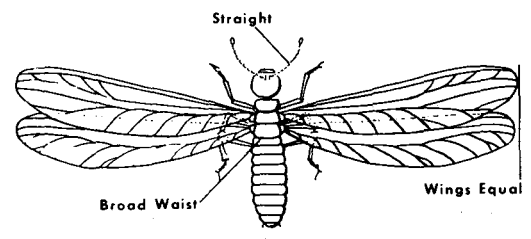
4 | ENTOMOLOGY NO. 30—Revised 1976
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Carpenter Ants

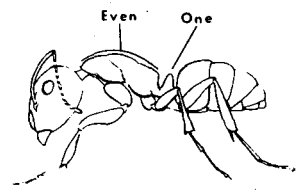
HOW TO IDENTIFY THEM

Carpenter ants are often mistaken for termites, especially in the spring and early summer when the winged reproductives are swarming. They differ from termites because they have narrow waists, elbowed antennae, and, if present, hind wings shorter than their front wings. Carpenter ants differ from other ants because they have the following combination of characteristics: the "waist" has only one knob, and the upper surface of the thorax is evenly rounded, with all segments having a uniform appearance (see the drawing). Other ants may have one of these characteristics, but never both.

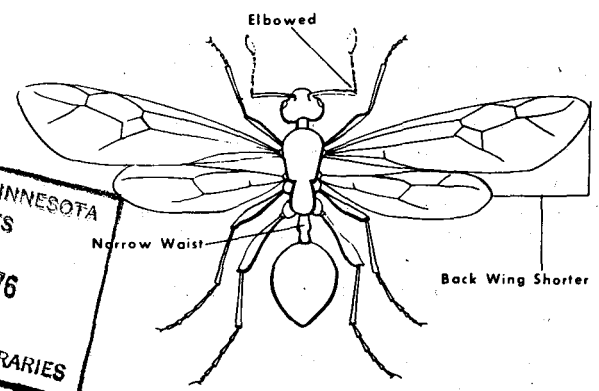
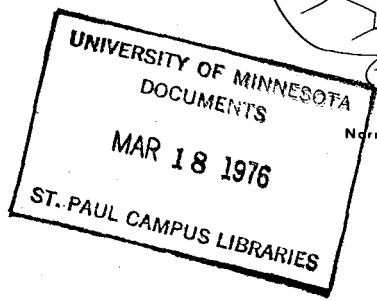
Most carpenter ants are larger than are any other ants. They range in size from 1/4 to 1/2-inch in length. They are usually black, but some are red and black. You may see carpenter ants, but termites avoid light and seldom are seen, except when swarming.



Winged Termite



Carpenter Ant



Winged Ant

WHAT THEY EAT

Outdoors, carpenter ants eat mainly other insects, but they also feed on honeydew of aphids and various sweet plant products. Inside houses, they hunt for meat, fats, and all kinds of sweets. They do most of their foraging outdoors and at night, so only a very small proportion of the total colony is seen. Carpenter ants do not eat wood as do termites.

WHERE THEY LIVE

Carpenter ants hollow their nests out of wood. They usually make their nests in soft wood that has a high moisture content. Decaying wood is an ideal nest site. They frequently make nests in rotting portions of trees, in dead stumps, or in logs or boards lying on or buried beneath the ground—often near foundations.

Inside buildings, carpenter ants nest in areas having moisture or decay. Exposure to the outside, leaks, condensation, poor air circulation, and contact with the soil provide good conditions. They frequently settle around basements, foundations, roofs, porches, windows, doors, and sink drains. Sometimes, carpenter ants nest in empty cavities—such as spaces between walls—rather than making their own nests.

THE DAMAGE THEY CAUSE

Generally, damage caused by carpenter ants is slight, as they nest in wood that already has been weakened. However as the colony grows, it may expand the nest into sound, dry wood if damaged wood is unavailable. The damage carpenter ants cause never is as serious as the damage caused by termites. Often, their presence is more annoying than is the wood destruction they cause.

HOW TO DETECT THEM

Finding carpenter ant nests usually is difficult because nests are often hidden in a wall or underground. A swarm of winged ants inside the house is good evidence that the nest is in the house or at least in contact with it. With considerable patience, you may be able to locate a nest by observing the movement and trails of wingless ants. Small piles of a coarse, sawdust-like material is a clear indication that a nest is present. You may be able to locate a large nest by listening for a distinct dry, rustling sound coming from the nest. The sound will increase if you disturb the ants by pounding near their nest.



Damage caused by carpenter ants.

Removing baseboards and trim may help you locate nests. Pay special attention to areas where moisture is a problem and to the favorite nest sites mentioned above. Check for nests in wood or trees outside the house. Many carpenter ants come into the house to hunt for food, but live outside.

HOW TO CONTROL THEM

If at all possible, locate and destroy their nests. Then replace damaged or decayed wood, if practical, and eliminate moisture problems. If you can't remove a nest, heavily dust or spray it with one of the recommended chemicals. You may put dusts or sprays on surfaces where ants travel or congregate, such as along baseboards or in holes or cracks in the walls and floors. However, this control method is not completely effective, because the ants will carry very little of the insecticide back to their nests, and most ants forage outside anyway. Sweetened baits apparently are not very effective against carpenter ants.

Dusts are the most practical material to use against ants, both indoors and out. A ready-to-use solution may be desirable for some indoor uses. Use solutions instead of dusts where children or pets might be exposed to the dusts.

You can apply oil solutions with a paint brush, but do not apply them to asphalt tile. When possible, apply insecticides only to out-of-the-way places.

If you know only the general location of a nest or if you cannot reach a nest to treat or remove it, placing an insecticide as close to the nest as possible may be effective. You may have to drill a series of small holes into the wall where you suspect the nest is located. Drill such holes at each interstud space in or just above the baseboard, and squirt insecticide into the holes with an oil can. Then cover the holes with putty or other filler.

If ants are coming from the outside, an insecticide application sprayed or painted onto the house foundation will help.

THE INSECTICIDES

Diazinon (Spectracide)

½ percent household solution

Malathion

3 percent solution in premium grade

3 percent emulsion (¾-cup 57 percent premium grade concentrate per gallon water)

4-5 percent dust

Propoxur (Baygon)

1 percent household solution

CAUTION!

Handle all insecticides with care. Avoid spilling. Wash with soap and water after using them or spilling them on your skin. Carefully read and follow label directions. Store all chemicals in a safe place where children cannot reach them.

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