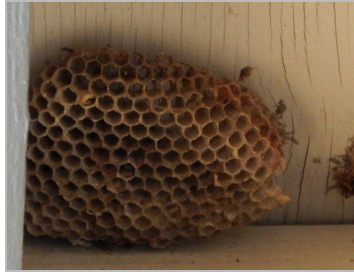


Wasps

(Paper Wasps – *Polistes* spp., and Other Common Wasps)



Paper wasp (adult)



Paper wasp nest: open comb, no cover



European hornet

Identification – **Paper wasps** are the slender, long-legged wasps, about 3/4 inch long and brown to reddish with yellow markings, that fly with their legs dangling. Their nest is a single open comb of gray paper cells, shaped like an upside-down umbrella and hung from a short stalk, with no paper cover. Look for them under eaves and decks, around window frames, porch ceilings and fence gates, and sometimes inside dryer and bathroom vents. You may see other wasps, too. **European hornets** are big (up to about 1¼ inches) and brown and yellow; they nest in hollow trees, eaves near the roof line and wall voids, fly to porch lights at night, and aren't aggressive. **Yellow jackets** are stocky and bright yellow and black, and they nest in the ground or wall voids and defend the nest hard. **Bald-faced hornets** are mostly dark brown with a pale, greenish-white face and build a gray, football-shaped paper nest in trees or eaves. **Mud daubers, potter wasps and cicada killers** are solitary wasps with no colony to defend, and they rarely sting.

Biology – Each paper wasp colony lasts one year. In spring, the queens that survived the winter start new nests, sometimes alone and sometimes with more than one queen sharing a nest. Over the summer, workers hunt caterpillars and other insects to feed the larvae, so they do some good. In the fall about 90% of the colony dies off. Only the future queens survive. Old nests are sometimes reused, or a new one may be built right next to last year's in the same good spot.

Wasps inside in fall, winter or spring? – No need to panic. These are the future queens. When the heat comes on or the first warm days arrive, they wake up and try to get out, head for the light and usually die in the window sills. It's normally half a dozen to a few dozen, and it runs its course in a week or two. There's no nest yet and nothing to treat, and they won't reproduce in the house. Spraying the walls would only hurry them along a little, and dead wasps in the walls can bring on carpet beetles later.

What works – **Treat and remove the nests in summer, while they're active.** Paper wasps aren't as defensive as yellow jackets, but they will sting to protect the nest, and they can sting more than once. A nest higher than 15 to 20 feet poses little threat to people on the ground. Left alone, most of the nest dies in the late fall, since the majority of the nesting wasps don't survive winter. The future queens that survive overwinter in leaf clutter, hollow logs, or sometimes under siding and in homes, and the empty nest can then be safely removed. Caulking around windows and door frames before fall helps keep the queens out.

What you can do – Check eaves, decks and play sets in late spring, when nests are small. If a nest is small, you can knock it down from a safe distance with a long pole or a strong spray from the hose, but if it's large, or you're allergic to stings, leave it for us. For the ones that turn up indoors, a fly swatter or vacuum is all you need; just make sure your window screens are in place.

When to call Dynamic – Give us a call if there's a large nest near a door, deck or play area, if wasps are going in and out of a hole in the siding, soffit or a vent, or if anyone in the house is allergic. We treat and remove nests we can reach. If you're not sure what kind of wasp it is, send us a photo and we'll identify it for you.