

# PestGazette

SPRING 2008



## How Does Your Garden Grow? Consider this Before Digging in Your Flower Beds ...

**H**ave you ever stopped to consider that what you do in your plant beds, especially up close to your home's foundation, may impact the termite activity in and around your home?

As you dig and plant (or even have construction done) near the foundation of your home, you may be disrupting a termite-treated zone or barrier that you have paid for to prevent a termite infestation. Always keep this in mind *before* you dig!

Many homeowners love to mulch their yards! And there are a variety of mulches out there including pine straws and wood/bark mulches. Mulches are meant to insulate and keep plants warm in the winter and then provide moisture retention and

protection in the dryer months of the year. Research evidence supports the fact that termites are attracted to both increased thermal and moisture gradients. In lay terms, this means that termites will follow and cue in on increased warmth and water areas near a home. If you are going to use mulch in your garden near your home, rake it away from the home's foundation and the treated zone; you may also want to consider using hardwood over softwood mulches, as softwoods have been shown to be more attractive to termites. Hardwood mulches are harder to find, but may be worth your effort in the long run.

*If for any reason you should suspect termite activity, don't forget to give us a call! ■*

## Protect Your Property ... Termites are on the Swarm

**S**pring is the time when most of the most common termites in the country "swarm," or send out winged termites to start new colonies.

These termites, known as subterranean termites because they usually are found in or near soil, can cause serious damage. In fact, the National Pest Management Association estimates that termites cause over five billion dollars in damage each year, just in the United States.

Subterranean termites are found throughout most of the country, and the "swarmers" may number in the thousands and emerge usually on warm spring days. Swarmers won't hurt you but they can cause start new colonies which can damage your property. You also might find just the wings of insects after a swarm, the result of swarmers breaking off their wings prior to mating. If you see any swarms of insects, inside or outside, call our office. We'll be happy to schedule an inspection for your peace of mind. ■



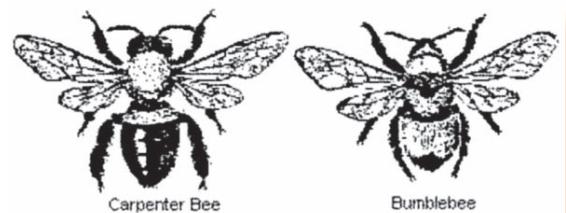
## Carpenter Bees



*Carpenter bees nest in a wide range of softwoods and hardwoods, particularly if the wood is weathered or bare (unpainted).*

Spring's abuzz with flying insects and this includes a rather large bumble bee like creature seen buzzing around your wooden patio deck, stair rail or eaves of your home. Although somewhat bumble bee like in appearance, these are actually another pest altogether, called a *carpenter bee*. Bumble bees tend to be fuzzy all over and carpenter bees have smooth shiny black abdomens without fuzz. Despite their similar appearance, the nesting habits of the two types of bees are quite different. Bumble bees usually nest in the ground whereas carpenter bees tunnel into wood to lay their eggs.

Carpenter bees nest in a wide range of softwoods and hardwoods, particularly if the wood is weathered or bare (unpainted). Eastern species of carpenter bees prefer softwoods such as cedar, redwood, cypress, pine, and fir. The bees can more easily tunnel through woods that are soft and that have a straight grain. Western species of carpenter bees often nest in oak, eucalyptus, and redwood. The females drill into wood and form an entrance hole about 1 inch in diameter; they then continue with a gallery of about five inches long in which to lay their eggs. They provision each egg in the gallery with a bit of pollen. In this process, they can also create quite a mess, as they stain the area with the yellow/brown pollen and feces they produce.

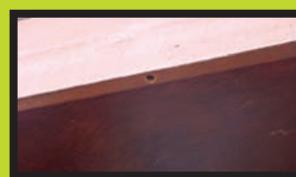


The nesting action of these carpenter bees may end up destroying the wooden members of your patio deck, railings, fascia boards, siding, wooden shakes, eaves outdoor furniture or fence posts. Painted or pressure-treated wood is much less susceptible to attack.

Both males and females can be aggressive and territorial as well, and will dive bomb you as you approach their nest sites. However, stings from female carpenter bees are rare. (Males do not have a stinger and do not sting at all.) Still, most homeowners do not want to have to deal with aggressive bee like pests that destroy their home. Remember to call us, your pest professionals to assist you in treating and preventing further carpenter bee attack and damage to the wooden parts of your home. We'll get those carpenter bees to **buzz off** ... so you can enjoy the nice spring weather! ■



*Carpenter bee staining on fascia board of house.*



*Carpenter bee entry on fascia.*



*Carpenter bee gallery exposed ... attractive to birds.*

## Spider Beetles

**W**hat is that tick-like creature in my dog's pet food? Spider beetles are primarily pests of pet food and cereal products, which often remain in storage for long periods of time and become damp or moist. Spider beetles are typically 1/16th to 3/16th inches long, oval or cylindrical, long-legged and brown in color. Some species look something like small spiders or large ticks or mites with long legs and a globular abdomen.

Spider beetles are scavengers both in the adult and in the larval stages. They feed and reproduce in warehouses, grain mills, museums, and homes with broken grain or grain products, seeds, dried fruits or meats, wool, hair, feathers, droppings, animal feeds and sugar.

You've probably never noticed a spider beetle because they prefer to forage at night or in dark locations. They can be found within walls and attics, in the cracks of wooden floors and in the nests of birds and rodents. They can be active at temperatures well below freezing. They do not bite or sting humans or pets, spread diseases, or feed on or damage the house or furniture.

Controlling spider beetles in your home should be done by a professional. A thorough inspection must be conducted. Infested items should be located and eliminated. This may be a challenge because of the large number of possibly infested items. (This is why you will want the assistance of a pest management professional to help you.)

Shelves with infested products should be emptied and thoroughly vacuumed. Inspect all stored foods routinely and eliminate any dampness or high humidity conditions. Keep stored products in airtight containers with secure lids. Eliminate rodents, birds, and other insect pests as spider beetles feed on feces and dead insects as well. Typically, removal of infested product, proper sanitation of spills and proper storage are necessary to control them. But, pesticides may be needed. Your pest professional will know how to apply these products for proper site placement, especially when dealing with food storage areas. So, give us a call! ■

*Spider beetles are tiny — typically only 1/16th to 3/16th inches long. They are primarily pests of pet food and cereal products.*



## Springtime for Springtails

**S**pringtails are very small, wingless insects about 1/16th inches long that jump! They can occur in large numbers in moist areas, such as around plumbing in bathrooms, basements, or kitchens, or also in well-irrigated lawns and turf. Most homeowners notice them in early spring around tubs or toilets, especially near drains, leaking water pipes, sinks, and in the soil of over-watered house plants but they can be pests all year long. Sometimes, they are known as snow fleas; this is because they can accumulate on the tops of banks of melting snow. They get their name from the ability to leap through the air three to four inches by means of a tail-like mechanism (a furcula) tucked under the abdomen.

Populations can be amazingly high, ... up to 100,000 per cubic meter of surface soil, or many millions per acre! Most feed on algae, fungi, and decaying vegetable matter, and they are abundant only in damp, moist or very humid locations. Others feed on plant roots or nibble on young plant leaves and germinating seeds in flowerbeds. Actually, springtail presence is often considered beneficial outdoors because they reduce decaying vegetation back to soil, (they are good recyclers!). Sometimes they are confused as fleas, but they do not bite or do any damage to humans, pets or home furnishings. They are simply a nuisance and may indicate a moisture problem in your home, such as a leak or plumbing line break. Sometimes they may become a pest by their presence when very abundant, and by entering homes through doorways, screens, or other openings. Buildings with constant high humidity may be overrun with springtails. That's where we, as your pest professionals, may be able to assist you. Please give us a call to rid your home of your springtail pest problem! ■





Adult drain flies are tiny (1/5 to 1/6 inch long), fuzzy, dark or grayish insects with the body and wings densely covered with small hairs.



## Drain Flies

*“EEEEK! What are those small, squat-looking flies coming out of my shower drain?”*

**D**rain flies sometimes appear suddenly and mysteriously, becoming a nuisance in both homes and commercial buildings. Adult flies may become so numerous indoors that they congregate at windows, darken lamp shades at night, fall into food and accumulate around showers, bathtubs, sinks and floor drains, especially in the basement. Outdoors they mar fresh paint and plug sewage filter beds (intakes and drains), getting into the eyes, ears and noses of people in the area. Since these flies originate in filthy conditions, there is always the possibility of human health disease transmission.

Adult drain flies are tiny (1/5 to 1/6 inch long), fuzzy, dark or grayish insects with the body and wings densely covered with small hairs; they may appear to some people like small moths because of these hairs and so they are also known as moth flies. Wings, appearing too large for the body, are held roof-like over the body when at rest. They are very weak fliers.

Drain flies reproduce in polluted, shallow water or highly moist organic solids. The eggs, larvae (*aka maggots*) and pupae can be found in

the muck, slime, or gelatinous film often accumulating on the sides of drains and overflow pipes in homes, septic tanks and moist compost. They have also been found in dirty garbage containers, rain barrels and tree holes.

Adults live for only about two weeks. They feed on flower nectar and polluted water. During the day, adults rest in shaded areas or on walls near plumbing fixtures and on the sides of showers and tubs. Most activity occurs during the evening when these flies are seen hovering about drains and sinks.

Drain flies do not bite humans but may become a nuisance by their presence in large populations. Sometimes it takes persistent effort to eradicate an infestation in the home. Your pest professional will concentrate on eliminating larval breeding sites from drains in floors, sinks, wash basins, bathtubs, etc. Often the most effective method is to clean the drain pipes and traps to eliminate the gelatinous rotting, organic matter, thereby eliminating the larval food source. Your pest professional will also have non-caustic bacterial products that rapidly biodegrade organic matter. ■

