

Carpenter Bees

Identification

Carpenter bees look similar to bumblebees. They are about 1" long and are an iridescent (shiny) black color. Males of some species are brightly colored. They may make a loud buzzing noise when flying, but rarely sting.

Damage to Structures

Carpenter bees bore into wood to make nests. They prefer soft wood, such as pine, cedar, fir, redwood, and cypress, and avoid harder wood.

Their tunnels are approximately 1/2" in diameter and 6-10" deep. They may make multiple tunnels or multiple bees may join their tunnels, creating tunnels extending as far as 10 feet into wood timbers. These tunnels may weaken wood structures.

Prevention

Exterior parts of structures should be made of harder woods that are rarely infested with carpenter bees. Paint exposed wood surfaces and fill cracks to discourage bees from boring.

Control

Existing carpenter bee holes should be filled with steel wool and caulk to prevent re-use. Wait until bees have emerged before filling tunnels. This is often enough to protect structures from carpenter bees.

In cases of large infestation, or if structures are compromised, insecticides can be used to control carpenter bees. Tunnels should be treated in early spring or fall, and at night when bees are inside. Products containing pyrethrin, borate, disodium octaborate tetrahydrate, cyflurthrin, or pyrethroids are labeled for use against carpenter bees. Always follow label directions when using insecticides.

San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District

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Monday-Friday
8a.m. to 4:30p.m.

www.smcmvcd.org

