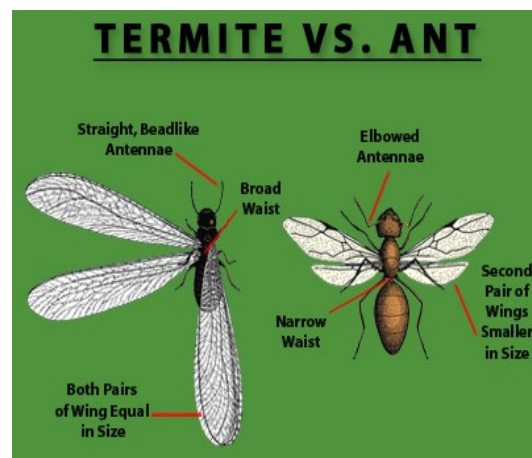




Carpenter Ants



- Carpenter ants are one of the most common problems in Massachusetts. Carpenter ants may be black, brown, or red, and up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in length. Carpenter ants are often confused with termites by many homeowners. Carpenter ants are one of the most difficult pests to control.
- Carpenter ants, like termites, produce winged reproductives called swarmers. One way to tell the two apart is ant swarmers have a pinched waist and pairs of wings that are unequal in length. Ant swarmers do not drop their wings. Termite swarmers drop their wings a short time after emerging. Seeing a number of any kind of winged ant inside the home is the sign of a problem. An ant colony does not start producing swarmers (young queens and males) until it contains 2,000 or more workers. It may take from 3 to 6 years to reach this stage. Observing carpenter ant swarmers in the home is usually the sign of a mature colony nearby.



- Carpenter ants are attracted to moisture. They are almost always found nesting near a damp area but often continue into sound wood. Unlike termites, carpenter ants do not eat and digest wood but rather excavate galleries and live in wood. Carpenter ants push the sawdust (called frass) out of the wood as they excavate the wood creating galleries to live in. Frass contains pieces of dead ants and other insects making it distinguishable from sawdust.

- Ants are most active at sunrise and sunset as they are nocturnal but may be seen foraging during the day in large numbers. They do not eat wood. They feed primarily on sugar solutions from honeydew producing insects like aphids, tree sap, plant juices, sweets and juices of insects they capture.



carpenter ant



Swarmer



Carpenter Ant Damage

- Carpenter ants can sometimes be heard behind a wall. The sound has been described as a crackling noise. Many think it sounds like Rice Krispies or aluminum foil crinkling. This is a rare event and shouldn't be relied on as an inspection technique.
- Carpenter ants are one of the few types of ants in which adult workers can vary in size. A lot of people believe only “giant” ants or flying ants are carpenter ants.
- In most cases the best way to determine if a treatment is needed for the technician to speak with the current occupants of the home. The frass (sawdust) is usually kicked out behind finished walls or ceilings and will be hidden from the inspector. Asking the occupants the frequency and areas that ants are seen is the best way to narrow down any nest locations. After interviewing the occupants and performing an inspection the technician is able to narrow down likely nest locations and design an appropriate treatment plan.
- Seeing an ant or two during the first warm weeks of the year is not always the sign of a problem however seeing regular ongoing activity, winged ants, sawdust or trails of ants are likely the signs of a problem that need treatment. Typically carpenter ants have a parent colony nesting outside in live or dead trees, landscaping timbers, firewood piles etc. When the colony grows large and needs room to expand smaller nests called satellite nests are set up. As many as 20 satellite nests can be associated with one main colony that contains the queen. Satellite nests are usually set up in nearby structures because the heated protective structures are more conducive for the older stages of ants. It is not uncommon for a house to have several satellite nests inside.
- Carpenter ants will move back and forth between parent and satellite nests as well as feeding areas. This is another reason to keep mulch, trees, shrubs, ivy and other areas conducive to ants as far away from the structure as possible.

- Ants move along trails by following a chemical scent laid down by other ants. Trailing ants may be difficult to find or follow as they may be subterranean, behind walls, or trailing off trees and power lines entering the house near the roof line.
- YPC offers one-time calls and service plans for control of carpenter ants. Again, altering the environment to eliminate moisture and food sources is the best thing a homeowner can do to achieve long term control.
- Talk with your YPC inspector for suggestions for long term control or which plan will work best for your homes situation.
- Try and save samples of flying “ants” for an experienced technician to look at. You want to make sure those ants aren't termites.



Close up of carpenter ants nesting in a piece of wood



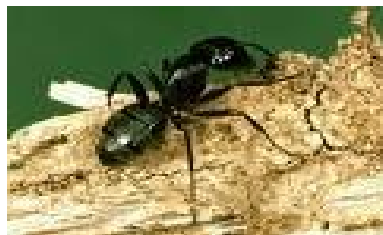
Carpenter Ant Damage



Carpenter Ant Frass



Carpenter ants around nest



Excavating wood

