

Bothered by Bees or Wasps??

Many people mistake wasps and bees, particularly yellow jacket wasps and honey bees. They are cousins but they have very different life styles and looks.

Honey bees or Yellow jackets in or around your home?

If you have yellow jackets – a kind of social wasp, rest assured they will be gone after two hard frosts. If they are not bothering you, ask yourself if you can live with them and appreciate them as beneficial predators. If you cannot live with them, you may need to exterminate them. If it is late summer or fall keep in mind the colony has been growing there all season, and if they have not yet bothered you, they likely won't start.

If you have a honey bee colony nesting in the wall of your house, ask yourself if you can live with them and appreciate they are beneficial pollinators. If you cannot live with them, you will need to contact a contractor and a beekeeper for removal options. Normally, a honey bee colony cannot be removed through the entrance hole; the siding or internal wall of the house must be removed to reach the entire nest.

In general:

Wasps

- *Wasps are shiny (no noticeable hairs)*
- *Eat other insects (soft bodied caterpillar, spiders) and are beneficial predators*
- *Wasps are carnivores and may be attracted to meat at your picnic. They also are attracted to sweet soft drinks.*

Bees

- *Bees appear fuzzy or hairy*
- *Bees eat pollen and nectar from flowers and are beneficial pollinators*
- *Bees do not eat meat and are not attracted to your picnic in late August. They generally are not attracted to soft drinks.*

Yellow jackets:

- Yellow jackets are one type of wasp. They are yellow and black banded and shiny. They live in a social colony and the nest is a greyish paper carton.
- Yellow jackets usually nest underground in a burrow and are readily seen rapidly flying in and out, especially if you run your lawn mower over the opening of the nest. If they are living in the wall of a house, you will not see the paper nest, but you will see them flying in and out.
- Yellow jackets can sting multiple times without losing their life.
- Yellow jackets have an annual colony, meaning the entire colony of wasps will die off after two hard frosts. Only new queens survive the winter by hibernating underground. The queens will establish new nests in spring and will not reuse the old paper nest.
- Yellow jackets do not produce or store honey.



YELLOW JACKET WASP NEST IN GROUND
PHOTO: PESTFREEGOGREEN.COM

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Honey bees:

- Honey bees are one type of bee. They are orange-yellow or brown and black banded, and fuzzy. They are also social and the nest is constructed of beeswax.
- Honey bees nest in a beehive, a cavity of a tree, or sometimes in the wall of a house, where they can be seen flying in and out. They do not nest in a hole in the ground.
- Honey bees can sting only once and die after stinging.
- Honey bees form perennial colonies, meaning the entire colony of bees can survive the winter, clustering in the nest and producing heat by consuming stored honey.
- Honey bees are the only type of bee that collects large amounts of nectar from flowers to store in the nest as honey.



HONEY BEE ON A FLOWER

Nest Materials:

Yellowjacket wasps build a greyish-brown paper envelope around the nest.



WASP NESTS MADE OF PAPER PULP, SCRAPED FROM TREE BARK

Hornets are another type of social wasp that builds their nest in a tree or other exposed area, as opposed to yellow jacket wasps that normally put their paper nest underground or inside a cavity. Hornets normally do not pester people, as do yellow jackets.

Honey bees make their nests out of wax secreted from glands in their abdomen. The nest does not have a greyish brown envelope around it, so if you can see the nest it would be surrounded by bees and you could see the whitish-yellow wax combs hanging vertically. It is highly unusual to see a honey bee colony in an exposed location, as in this photo, because they nest inside a tree cavity, a bee box, or other manmade structure. This colony is shown here to contrast it with a wasp nest.



HONEY BEE NEST MADE OF WAX COMB

Additional Information

- For detailed information about wasps please see University of Minnesota Extension Website.
- [Wasp and Bee Control](#) by Jeffery Hahn, Phil Pellitteri, and Donald Lewis
- (<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG3732.html>)
- [Be on the Watch for Yellowjackets](#) by Jeffery Hahn
- (<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/efans/ygnews/2010/08/be-on-the-watch-for-yellowjack.html>)
- For information about honey bee removal, please contact Honeymoon Honey Bees at www.honeymoonhoneybee.com