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## **Crafty Carpenter Ants**

Carpenter ants tend to invade homes in Texas throughout the year. They are usually noticed in late winter and early spring, when winged reproductive ants begin looking for a suitable nesting site in a swarming flight. The winged reproductives usually are entirely black and  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, but the worker carpenter ants are  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches in length with a red head and thorax and a black abdomen.

Carpenter ants do not eat wood, but they use protected areas in moist and dry wood as nesting sites. They usually construct two different kinds of nests, a parent nest that contains an egg-laying queen, brood and worker ants, and satellite colonies that usually contains worker ants. The carpenter ants found inside a home may have originated from the parent colony located in a tree stump or woodpile outdoors.

Indoor colonies may be located by looking for piles of sawdust, dead ants and pieces of other insects in such areas as the floor and in window sills. A moisture meter can also locate wet spots in order to find possible nesting sites indoors. Outdoor colonies can be located by examining tree trunks and stumps for trailing ants. Also carpenter ants may be seen traveling over such areas as tree branches or vines touching the roof, electrical and telephone wires in order to enter structures.

### **Some Control Options for Carpenter Ants**

#### **Some Preventive Actions:**

- 1) Reduce moisture problems by fixing plumbing and roof leaks.
- 2) Trim tree limbs and vegetation touching the roof or side of structures.
- 3) Seal cracks and openings in the foundation.
- 4) Remove dead stumps that are close to structures.

#### **Some Chemical Control Options:**

Carpenter ants can be difficult to control, since all the nests must be located and treated. Carpenter ant nests can be located by looking for small piles of sawdust or frass and pieces of dead ants and other insects. Carpenter ant frass is usually pushed out of a small hole in the nest chamber. By locating the small hole, this will usually lead to the nesting chamber. Once located, treat wall voids and other hidden spaces where ants are entering by drilling small holes and injecting chemicals such as dusts in the area. These dusts may contain the active ingredients cyfluthrin, deltamethrin, or boric acid. The dust will disperse to contact and kill the ants.

If no effort is made to locate the outdoor nesting site, the carpenter ant population will most likely continue to exist. Once the outdoor nesting site is located, insecticides can be sprayed or drenched into the nest.

Sometimes it is difficult to locate and treat all carpenter ant nesting sites indoors and outdoors, so it is best to call a pest management professional.



Picture of a carpenter ant, *Camponotus* sp. (Hymenoptera: Formicidae). Photo by Bart Drees, Texas Cooperative Extension.

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