

The Wasp

Easily distinguishable by their bright yellow and black abdomen, the wasp is a summer pest whose sting is painful and, occasionally, fatal.

Wasps typically nest in grassy banks, voids in walls and trees and, of course, our roof spaces. I've also treated them in dense bushes, vegetable patches, sheds, summerhouses and a car. The queen, having hibernated over winter starts the nest by making a golf-ball sized nest in which she lays 10 to 20 eggs. The resultant adult, sterile female, workers then continue building the nest whilst the queen keeps on laying. The wasp grubs are fed by the workers until they pupate and become adults themselves. Their diet primarily consists of insects, spiders and sugary substances. The average nest will contain around 4,000 wasps by late summer and will be around 30cm across. Far larger nests have been discovered, with one recently containing an estimated 500,000 wasps.



Later in the summer, young queens and adult males emerge and mate. The fertilised new queens then fly off to search out suitable over-wintering sites ready for the following year. In the meantime, this year's adults are faced with late summer and autumn when the weather turns cooler, the days shorten and the fruit ripens. They become more sluggish as the temperatures drop and their indulgence in the over-ripe fruit produces a tipsy behaviour which can lead to aggression and a much greater inclination to sting.

Wasp stings are generally harmless although they can be initially painful and subsequently very itchy for a few days. Intolerance to wasp stings is relatively rare though it can build through being stung a number of times.

If you have a wasp nest in a location which you feel is a threat then it is highly recommended that you do not attempt to tackle it yourself. Pest controllers take measures to ensure that they are protected from the wasp stings for very good reasons. Attempts to destroy the nest without a sting proof suit can be disastrous as 100's or even 1000's of wasps can almost instantly come out in defence of their nest and a large number of stings can prove fatal. Pest controllers will generally apply a residual insecticide to the nest using a lance which allows them to treat the nest from a safer distance. Modern insecticides are designed so that they do not excite the wasps and the nest quickly dies without a fuss.

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