

PestGazette

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April Showers Bring May ... Pests?

Weather can dramatically influence the number and kinds of pests that enter a structure. Extreme heat and dry weather in the summer can cause ants to seek water and cooler environments indoors. In the winter, pests like box elder bugs and cluster flies seek warm structures to overwinter. Rainy springtime weather is no different. Warmer temperatures and wet weather can cause pests to move from their outdoor locations into structures.

Many outdoor insect invaders, including ants, spend much of the winter in sheltered locations in the soil and under rocks, logs and mulch. Spending the winter underneath insulated items or below the frost line in soil can help entire colonies to survive cold temperatures. When the weather warms and

spring showers begin, saturated soil forces many of these pests out of their hiding places in search of drier places to nest.

Ants are especially likely to enter homes following heavy rain. In addition to seeking higher ground, ants may be forced indoors to forage for food when the sweet secretions of honeydew producing insects like aphids and scale insects is washed away during heavy rain. Honeydew is an important food for many ant species. Without their primary food source present outdoors, ants may come indoors in search of food.

One of the best ways to keep these opportunistic pests from entering your house is to seal all cracks and crevices around windows, doors, and utility penetrations. Pest-proofing your home is one of the best ways to keep pests out this spring.

Termite Invasion

Termite Season is Here ... Are You Ready?

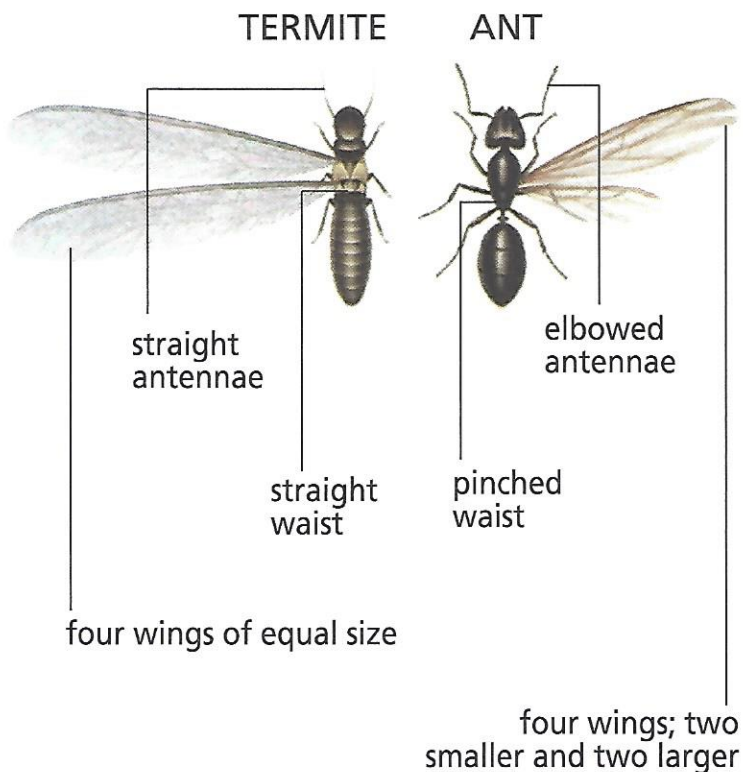
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The most visible sign of a termite infestation is the production of winged reproductive termites called swarmers. Thousands of winged termites emerge from the colony in the spring months seeking mates and places to start a new colony. Most of the swarming termites do not survive the event because predators like birds or lizards feast on the swarm or they do not find a suitable place to begin a new colony. In order for a recently mated king and queen termite to start a new colony, they must locate an adequate location that offers moisture, a cellulose food source and soil. Because of these prerequisites, most swarming termites inside a home do not spread the infestation, but do serve as an important warning sign that the structure is infested.

To the untrained eye, winged termites can sometimes be mistaken for flying ants. Superficially, flying ants and winged termites may look similar, but there are three easy ways to tell the two pests apart. First, termites can be differentiated from ants by the shape of

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Termites (continued from page 1)

their bodies. Ants and termites, like all insects have three body parts – head, thorax and abdomen. Unlike termites, ants have a distinct waist-like division between the thorax and abdomen. Termites have a broad waist. Another way to distinguish between ants and termites is to take a close look at the antennae. Termites have straight or slightly curved antennae, but ants have bent, or “elbowed” antennae. Wing shape is the third and final way to tell a winged termite from a flying ant. All four wings on a termite are the same size, while the front wings of ants are larger than the hind wings.

Even though swarming termites represent an easy way to determine an active infestation of termites, homeowners shouldn't be lulled into thinking that the structure is free of termites just because there's no sign of a swarm. Termite colonies typically don't swarm during the first few years of their existence while the population grows. Alternatively, swarms may occur, but may happen outdoors, or in other areas where they remain undetected.

If you observe winged insects or suspect termites may be present inside or around your home, contact your pest management professional immediately for a thorough inspection. In fact, it is a good practice to have an annual termite inspection of your property. Call today to schedule a termite inspection today! ■

Spring Cleaning for your Yard

When we think of spring, we don't always extend our efforts to the backyard. However, there are some simple steps that you can take on the exterior of the structure that will help to reduce the likelihood of pests invading this spring. Here are some simple steps that you can take to reduce the number of potential harborage locations around your property:



Rake Up Leaves

Removing the old leaves that have collected against the foundation of your home, under the deck, and inside the window wells will eliminate potential hiding and feeding places for many occasional invaders like millipedes, ants, sowbugs and beetles. Leaves trap moisture and provide food for pests that feed on them as they decay.



Remove Standing Water

Improper drainage around the foundation of a structure can result in standing water which can be attractive to many different pests. Mosquitoes are especially troublesome in locations where man-made pools of standing water are present. Some species, like the Asian tiger mosquito specialize in locating and identifying temporary breeding locations and can deposit eggs in water sources as small as a bottle cap. The adult mosquito will lay its eggs in stagnant water like bird baths, clogged gutters, unused flower pots and other containers in the backyard. The larvae develop rapidly and breeding populations of these daytime biting mosquitoes can become established on a property very quickly.



Trim Weeds

Weeds around the foundation of the house can provide access to the building, hide evidence of infestation and trap moisture. Even though it might not be time to mow the entire lawn, the weeds adjacent to the foundation may need to be trimmed to eliminate this pest friendly environment. Vegetation next to the foundation can also make it difficult for termite inspectors to get a close look at the foundation wall, which is primary access point for termites to enter a structure.



Clean Up Debris

It might go without saying, but any debris that is lying in the yard can become a harborage area for insects like ants, crickets, sowbugs, and even rodents. Rats will often dig burrows beneath piles of debris because it provides shelter from predators. Firewood and brush piles should be relocated as far from the structure as practical. Ants like odorous house ants and acrobat ants will often nest beneath pieces of wood or other discarded items. Even termites can be attracted to wood scraps and firewood that is stored adjacent to a structure. ■

Ants, Ants, Everywhere!

Identifying what species of ant is present in a structure is the first step that a professional takes when battling an ant infestations.



odorant house ant



pavement ant



carpenter ant

At first glance, most ants look very similar to one another. In fact, most people don't even realize that there are multiple species of ants that infest structures. Each species of pest ant has different behaviors that pest management professionals exploit to gain control. Three of the most commonly encountered pest ants are highlighted below.

Odorous House Ants

The odorous house ant is one of the most troublesome and difficult to control ants in the United States. Pest management professionals use a unique method to distinguish the odorous house ant from other structure infesting ants. When squashed, the odorous house ant has an unmistakable rotten-coconut odor. This ant exhibits unique behaviors that make it challenging to control. For instance, each colony can have multiple queens, each cooperating to produce eggs, therefore colonies can get very large in a short period of time.

Pavement Ants

Pavement ants are one of the most easily recognizable of the common structure infesting ants – when they are outside. These small brown ants are often observed pushing sand and dirt into piles in cracks in sidewalks and patios at the entrance to their nests. These ants will com-

monly infest homes when they nest beneath slab foundations or inside crawlspaces. These ants are especially fond of protein and fat-rich foods as well as sweets. Pest management professionals will often take advantage of their knowledge of ant food preferences when selecting baits for ant control.

Carpenter Ants

When most people think of carpenter ants, the first thing that comes to mind is large, black ants. Carpenter ant colonies actually produce ants in various sizes ranging from small to large. Smaller ants typically tend to duties inside the nests, while larger "major" workers venture out to forage for food and scout out new nesting areas. Carpenter ants are considered a wood destroying pest, because they excavate galleries in wood to create nesting locations. Unlike termites, carpenter ants don't eat wood, but they can cause significant damage to structural wood inside homes. Carpenter ants are often associated with wet or moisture damaged wood in homes.

Identifying what species of ant is present in a structure is the first step that a professional takes when battling an ant infestations. The biology and behavior of these pests varies by species, so if you see ants in your kitchen, don't hesitate to call for a professional identification. ■

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