

AGRICULTURAL GUIDE

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Insects

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Carpenter ants

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Carpenter ants are generally jet black, but there may be color variants with considerable red. They are large for ants; their size varies from one-eighth to one-half inch in length. This variation is due to the presence in most colonies of both "major" and "minor" workers.

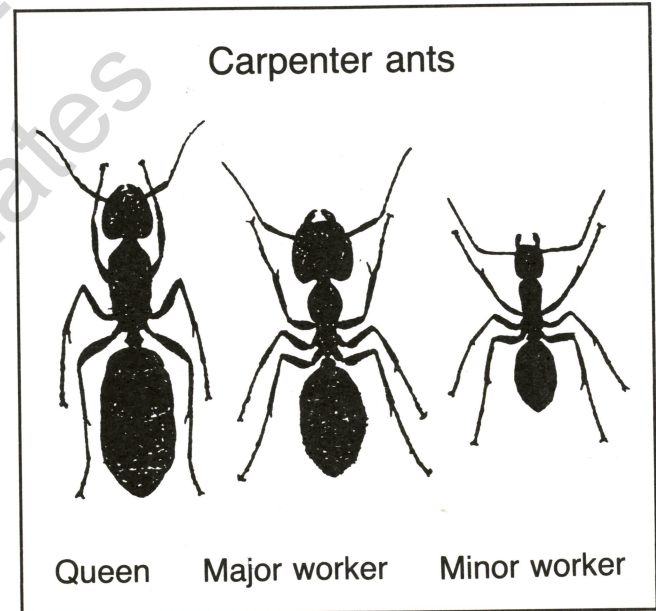
Mature colonies produce winged reproductive ants at any time, but the majority develop in late summer. After spending the winter in the nest, they swarm in the spring. Surviving pairs attempt to establish new colonies.

Habits

The diet of carpenter ants is quite varied and includes living and dead specimens of other insects, honeydew from aphids, sweets of all kinds, meat and fats. Foraging workers collect all the food for the colony. They carry it back to the nest intact or ingested and later regurgitate it to non-foraging members in the nest. These ants may forage up to 100 yards from the nest in search of food.

Carpenter ants may become pests in houses by foraging there for food. The greatest concern, however, is that they may cause serious damage to wood in the structure. Unlike termites, they do not feed upon wood, but merely use it as a place to nest.

Carpenter ants construct their nests in hollow trees, logs, posts, landscaping timbers and wood used in homes and other structures. These ants prefer to infest wood that is moist and rotting or that has otherwise been "hollowed out" by termites. They may locate nests in hollow doors or small void areas produced during construction. They may move from decaying portions of the wood into sound lumber in the process of enlarging the nest. They cut galleries with the grain of the wood following the softer parts of the wood. The ants leave harder parts as walls separating the tunnels and cut openings in these walls to allow access between tunnels. Access to the



outside may be through natural openings, or the ants may cut openings where none exist naturally.

The ants keep occupied galleries clean. They remove wood in the form of a coarse sawdust-like material, which they push from the nest. This often results in a cone-shaped pile accumulating just below the nest entrance hole. This pile may include, in addition to the wood fragments, other debris from the nest, including bits of soil, dead ants, parts of insects and remnants of other foods they ate.

Control

The secret to control is direct treatment of the nest. Look for the piles of sawdust to locate the entrance. Because worker ants move from the nest to forage for food, their movements may lead to your discovery of the nest opening. Inspect the entire structure and surrounding grounds, because the nest or nests may

be outdoors as well as in the structure.

If you find the nest entrance, use a dust formulation of an appropriate insecticide. Introduce the dust into the nest through the entrance hole using a hand duster with a tube with a tip that fits snugly in the entrance. It may be necessary to enlarge the hole to fit the duster. You can make a duster from a flexible plastic bottle equipped with a tube tip. Fill the bottle no more than one-third full, insert the tip in the entrance hole and inject the dust by alternately squeezing and releasing the pressure on the bottle. A dust containing 5 percent carbaryl (Sevin) is recommended for this treatment.

If you can't find the nest entrance, spray around the infested area with 0.5 percent diazinon, 1 percent propoxur (Baygon) or 0.5 percent chlorpyrifos (Dursban). One spray application may not eliminate the infestation, because only foraging workers will be affected. Repeat applications may be necessary to

continue to kill these exposed ants until the entire colony dies from lack of food from the foragers.

To prevent carpenter ant invasions from the outside, spray foundation wall, adjacent soil and around doors and windows with one of the insecticides mentioned above.

Leaking roofs, leaking gutters, leaking water pipes or other sources of moisture coming into contact with wood create conditions attractive to carpenter ants. Elimination of these conditions greatly reduces the threat of these ants.

Openings in living trees are attractive; close such openings. Stacks of firewood or other lumber outdoors are also attractive. The longer undisturbed, the better for the ants. It is better to keep on hand only that supply of firewood that you plan to use during one heating season. Store the wood off the ground and away from the house. Spraying of firewood to protect it is of doubtful value and is not recommended.