

Yellow Jackets and Other Home Invaders

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It's the time of year when we start seeing the normal fall insects coming around and into our homes. Questions are rolling in about yellow jackets, multicolored Asian lady beetles, leaf footed bugs, brown marmorated stink bug, some species of flies and more.

At best, most of these are annoying and some such as the yellow jackets and wasps are more annoying than others.

Yellow jackets are wasps and are actually good guys. They are predatory and feed on other insects. Adults capture the insects and chew and condition them to feed to the larvae.

Adult yellow jackets feed on sugars and carbohydrates. This time of the year they invite themselves to our picnics because we have all of their preferred foods.

Yellow jackets are very distinct and easy to identify. They are about one half inch long and have alternating black and yellow bands on the abdomen. Unlike honeybees, they are not covered with hairs.

Yellow jackets build their nests around homes, doors, entrances, eaves and in trees, etc. Knocking the home down in its early stages helps to prevent major populations in the fall. You might have to do this more than once.

Sprays are very effective in controlling them. However, if you don't apply at the right time (early evening, dusk when they are entering their home) you won't be as successful in knocking them down.

I have found at picnics that the wasp traps tend to work. Traps contain a sweet substance that attracts the wasps, just the same way your soda attracts them. Place the traps away from the picnic area.

Don't swat at the wasps. Stings can be painful and they don't normally attack unless provoked. Stings usually occur when you get one cornered in your elbow or some other body part.

Another predatory wasp is the baldfaced hornet. I have seen more and more of these around my pollinator-friendly plants. Again, the adults prefer sweets (nectar) and the larvae like the insects.

The baldfaced hornet is black and has ivory-white markings on the face along with white markings on the legs, abdomen and thorax.

These pests form the big paper-like bags in trees for nesting sites.

For the most part, all of these except for the fertilized queen are killed with a hard freeze. Unfortunately we have to wait a little while longer before this occurs- hopefully!

In addition, they don't normally re-use a nesting site so if you find a baldfaced hornet nest in a tree and want to keep it wait until after a hard freeze before removing.



Baldface Hornet