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## **Creepy Carpenter Ants**

Carpenter ants tend to invade homes in Texas throughout the year. The most common carpenter ant invader is  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches in length with a red head and thorax and a black abdomen. The winged reproductives may be entirely black and  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length.

Carpenter ants may establish nests in a number of different locations. 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.

Carpenter ants do not eat wood, but they use protected void areas as nesting sites. They will nest in both moist and dry wood, but prefer moist wood. Nesting sites usually found in structures are caused by a water leak, such as around sinks, bathtubs, and poorly sealed windows or door frames.

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. 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:**

Reduce moisture problems indoors by fixing plumbing and roof leaks.  
Trim tree limbs and vegetation touching the roof or side of structures.  
Stack firewood away from the foundation.  
Remove dead stumps that are close to structures.

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

Carpenter ant can be difficult to control, since all the nests must be located and treated. Carpenter ant nests can usually be located by the presence of 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, wall voids must be treated and other hidden spaces where ants are entering. Such materials as dusts can be used for treatment.

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, treatment must be applied such as a liquid spray.

Sometimes it is difficult to locate and treat all carpenter ant nesting sites, 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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