

# Pest Press

ISSUE #2

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

SPRING 2010



Figure 1. (a) honey bee, (b) bumble bee, (c) European paper wasp, (d) yellowjacket (baldfaced hornet). Photo credits (a and d) Johnny N. Dell, (b) L. Williams, (c) Whitney Cranshaw.

## IPM: Identification First!

Good IPM strategies rely on knowing your enemy. Before you can effectively prevent or control pests, you must know what they are and how they live. For instance, knowing the nesting habits of paper wasps will allow you to monitor potential nest sites. Early nest removal will help prevent problems later in the season. For more information on IPM including pest identification, see the resources at the end of this newsletter.

## BEES, WASPS, AND YELLOWJACKETS

**B**ees and other stinging insects such as yellowjackets and paper wasps can all be found in both urban and rural settings. Most species are beneficial insects, serving as pollinators and predators of other insects. However, where vulnerable populations such as children or allergic individuals are present, stinging insects can pose a significant hazard.

### BEES

Bumble bees, honey bees, and mason bees are important pollinators of flowering plants. These insects are usually peaceful when foraging for food, but both bumble bees and honey bees will aggressively defend their hives. Mason bees are seldom aggressive, even when threatened. Bees are rarely nuisance pests as they are seldom attracted to human food or food waste.

### PAPER WASPS AND YELLOWJACKETS

Paper wasps can be more aggressive than bees. The European paper wasp is the most common species in western Washington (a native paper wasp species is found mostly in central and eastern Washington). They build aerial, umbrella-shaped nests that are not enclosed with paper. While they are usually more docile than yellowjackets, European paper wasps may still react fiercely if they are disturbed. Their primary nuisance value lies in their habit of nesting in or under any sheltered location, such as soffits, deck rails, yard toys, decorations, light fixtures or mailboxes.

Yellowjackets and baldfaced hornets (not a true hornet, but actually a species of yellowjacket) can be moderately to very aggressive. These insects build enclosed paper nests. Depending on species, nests may be found

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Beginning in early spring and continuing into fall, watch for and report signs of bee or wasp activity or conditions that may attract them.

1. Watch for wasp activity and nests. Monitor sheltered areas beneath play structures, overhangs and eaves. Also pay attention to dense shrubs, trees, and planting beds, especially near high-traffic areas.
2. Report problems with outdoor trash containers. Trash cans should have snugly-fitting lids or spring-closing flaps. Dumpsters should be non-leaking and have tightly-fitting lids that are kept closed at all times.
3. NEVER leave open soda or juice unattended outside, even briefly. Scavenging yellowjackets are strongly attracted to sweet beverages. For safety, always use a straw or a cup with a lid.
4. **SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION** if you or someone you know is stung and has a known bee allergy or is stung on or near the face, neck, or mouth (even if there is no allergy). **WARNING SIGNS** requiring medical help include: rapid swelling, particularly of the face, mouth, or throat; swelling and soreness anywhere on the body (not just at the sting site); difficulty breathing (including wheezing or hoarseness); nausea or vomiting; color changes (pale or flushed); fever or chills; hives or rash; pain in muscles or joints; or fainting.

underground, in dense trees or shrubs, or in other sheltered areas such as under overhangs, play structures, or in wall voids. The aerial-nesting species are predators, hunting and feeding mainly on live insects. As these species are not scavengers, they are less likely to become nuisance pests around trash cans, dumpsters, or at picnics. Ground-nesting species build their nests at the base of stumps, or in existing holes in the ground in sheltered areas. These ground nests may have several entrances, making control and removal more complicated. Ground-nesting yellowjackets are both scavengers and predators, making them an aggressive nuisance at picnics and around unsecured trash cans and dumpsters.

## PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Set out yellowjacket traps in early spring to capture overwintering queens and help prevent establishment of new colonies. However, not all species are attracted to traps, so regular monitoring of high-risk areas is essential. Sheltered areas such as shrubs, dense trees, building overhangs, and permanent non-building structures including playground equipment (especially wooden) and covered play areas are all suitable nesting sites. Unused rodent burrows in landscape beds may also be prime sites for ground-nesting species. Nest removal or elimination should never be attempted without proper protective gear; however, a complete description of techniques for nest removal is outside the scope of this newsletter. Many school districts contract with professional pest control operators for these services. For more information or assistance, contact your local county Extension offices.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

WSU Extension Offices  
in your county

Carrie Foss  
Urban IPM Coordinator  
WSU Puyallup  
cfoss@wsu.edu  
253-445-4577

## ON THE WEB:

*UPEST*

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/upest/index.html>

*EB 0643 Yellowjackets & Paper Wasps*  
<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/eb0643/eb0643.pdf>

*IPM for Yellowjackets & Hornets in Schools*  
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/ipm/schoolipm/chap-19.pdf>

*IPM in Schools (University of Florida)*  
<http://schoolipm.ifas.ufl.edu/>

WSU Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local WSU Extension office.