

WASPS

What do wasps look like?

Although similar in size to bees, wasps are distinctive in their appearance because of their narrow waist and bright yellow and black banding. Wasps have two pairs of interlocking wings. Depending upon their species they are usually 1 - 2 cm in length, the most common being the common wasp (*Vespula vulgaris*) and the German wasp (*Vespula germanica*).

Wasps are aggressive when disturbed or frightened and it is not advisable to try to treat large nests or infestations yourself.

The Council provides information leaflets on the following range of pests:

Ants
Bedbugs
Cockroaches
Fleas
Flies
Mice
Pigeons
Rats
Slugs
Spiders
Wasps



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Where do they live?

Wasps live in nests that are typically found in roof spaces, airbricks, cavity walls, garden sheds, trees and even in rockeries and flowerbeds.

The nest is usually constructed from chewed bark and dried timber mixed with saliva and is a light grey/beige colour with a papery appearance. If undisturbed and built in an unrestricted space, the nest can measure up to 90 - 120 cm in circumference towards the end of the summer months. A nest this size would contain between 5,000- 10,000 individual wasps.

New nests are formed each year by queen wasps that have overwintered. Depending on the weather, nests can be found in late spring / early summer. The worker wasps die in the autumn and the nest is never reused.

I am already seeing large wasps in early spring. Why is this?

These are queen wasps which have overwintered, this sometimes happens even in late winter during warm weather. There may be several together and they are larger than normal wasps. It is unlikely that they will build a nest at this time of year.

Queens can be killed with a flying insect spray - thus preventing a nest being built.

Can wasps cause harm?

Wasps are aggressive when disturbed and will sting. This is painful and may cause redness and / or swelling but a sting is not normally serious, unless you are stung around the face, mouth, throat or tongue or suffer an allergic reaction to stings (known as anaphylactic shock). In these cases you should get immediate medical attention, as severe anaphylactic shock can be fatal.

I have found a "dead" nest. What should I do?

Wasps never re-use an old nest, so if you are certain that there is no activity it can simply be removed and disposed of. Any nest found during the winter will be "dead" and can be safely removed.

How can I get rid of live wasps' nests?

If you have a live nest that is not bothering you, then it is not essential to destroy it. However, nests can cause problems for your neighbours, so bear this in mind when deciding what to do.

Wasps can be very aggressive and if a nest is causing a nuisance then it is best treated professionally.

Insecticides that destroy wasps' nests can be purchased from garden centres and DIY stores. If you do decide to treat the nest yourself, do so late at night when the nest is quiet and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Seek professional advice from the Council's Environmental Health Service if you require any assistance.

How can I get rid of wasps indoors?

Insecticidal control using fly sprays ("knock down" sprays are available at most supermarkets) is a good, almost instant, way of dealing with the problem. Remove dead insects immediately and remember not to use insecticide near food and/or food preparation surfaces. Insecticide may also be harmful to household pets and fish, also humans should not inhale it.

Seek professional advice from the Council's Environmental Health Service if you require any assistance.

Warning: Use biocides safely. Always read the label and product information before use.

