

What Are Carpenter Ants?

Carpenter ants are one of the most common pests and the largest ant species in the Midwest.

Often referred to as "black ants" or "large black ants", there are red/black carpenter ants as well.

They play an important part in the balance of nature because they burrow and nest in dead trees, enhancing the decay of the wood. However, once they've entered your home or structure, they're no longer beneficial.

Unlike termites, carpenter ants do not eat wood; instead, they excavate it to make room for their growing colony. They push the sawdust like shavings outside their nest forming little piles below.

Carpenter ants live in colonies made up of a Queen, Workers (major and minor) and Winged Reproductives, also known as Swarmers.



What Do They Look Like?

We have over half a dozen different species here in the Great Lakes Region. They vary in size from about 1/8" - 1/2" and vary in color from a pale brown or yellow, to dark red, to black. Some are two colors. Most of the carpenter ants in our area are large and solid black.

The largest ant in the colony is the queen. She lays the eggs and never leaves the main colony. She began as a winged reproductive, but has since shed her wings never to fly again.

The workers vary in size with major and minor workers. The major workers are the largest workers and are nearly as big as the queen. They build and tend to the nest, forage for food and defend the nest and their territory.

When the colony is mature and prosperous, it will produce "winged reproductives" or swarmers once or twice a year in the spring. The female winged reproductives are large and will become the future queens of their own colony. The male winged reproductives are about 3/4 the size of the females and only live long enough to fertilize the queens.



Queen surrounded by workers



Winged reproductive

Signs Of An Infestation

- Large winged ants in the house in late winter and spring.
- Presence of small sawdust piles in or around your home or structure, emerging from cracks or crevices near walls or partitions.
- Large black ants crawling in and around the building.
- Slit-like holes in woodwork, especially near porch pillars, windows, doors and wood that comes in contact with soil. They are attracted to damp or rotting wood.



Sawdust piles



Exiting a slit-like hole

How Can I Prevent An Infestation?

- Carpenter ant colonies need a constant source of water to survive and will usually establish nests either in or near damp wood. Take the following precautions to prevent infestations in your home, building or structure.
- Remove logs, stumps and waste-wood within 100 yards. Stack firewood away from the foundation and elevate it off the ground. Never store it inside a structure as it's a prime nesting area for carpenter ants.
- Make sure soil or mulch isn't in contact with wood siding.
- Repair roof leaks, plumbing leaks and other moisture problems which will attract carpenter ants.
- Clip back tree limbs and vegetation touching the roof or siding. Limbs and branches are used as bridges by carpenter ants, allowing easy access from their nests.
- Seal cracks and openings in the foundation, especially where utility pipes and wires enter from the outside.

How Do I Eliminate Carpenter Ants?

There are several ways to eliminate carpenter ants, but unless you are able to locate the colony or nest, it may be difficult. For that reason, the ideal way to eliminate them is to contact Rose Pest Solutions.

Our pest management professionals will evaluate the infestation and create a solution designed to protect your structure from these obnoxious pests.