How do I know if I have wasps?

Wasps are generally bee-sized insects with distinct yellow and black bands. If very large wasps are seen they may be queens, hornets or what are now commonly called European wasps.

What may cause an Infestation?

A queen wasp starts a new nest (old nests are not reused) in late spring by chewing tiny amounts of wood, which with the wasps saliva, becomes a papery material. The nest may be in a roof space, hanging in a tree, shrub or in the eaves, in an air vent, or in the ground. These early golf ball sized nests are often seen in roof spaces when the queen has been killed whilst foraging for food for her young.

Later, when the young develop into female workers, the queen will remain in the nest to produce more offspring, and the nest will increase in size often to a volume sufficient to fill a bin liner. The nest is however mostly insulation (air) layers inside, and even very large nests may be compressed into a small amount of material i.e. the wood removed to make the nest causes no structural damage.

Throughout the summer the nest develops with the workers feeding the young on other insects. A wasps nest in the garden may well keep the garden free of other insect pests because of the very large number are consumed - just watch the continual stream of workers carrying insects into the nest in August.

In late summer/autumn, a hatch of young queens and males leave the nest empty and redundant. Foraging workers now turn to sweet/sugary foods. The workers and males die leaving only the queens who look for shelter to spend the winter and then set up new nest sites in the next year.
What Treatment is Available?

It is a great shame to destroy wasp’s nests, as wasps are beneficial in the role of predators on other insects. No one ever suggests killing ladybirds!

If the wasps’ nest is not in a sensitive location try to leave it where it is.

If you encourage children to observe wasps nest activity you may avoid a fear of wasps. Any panic shown is much more likely to produce an unwanted reaction by the wasp.

If however the location of a wasps nest makes normal life difficult e.g. the nest is very close to a door etc., it may be necessary to have the nest destroyed. By treating at the entrance to the nest with pesticide the nest will be destroyed.

For further information please contact:

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