

## Carpenter Bees

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Though reliable pollinators, carpenter bees can be very destructive making ½-inch diameter holes and tunnels through wooden decks, awnings, and siding. You may notice the sawdust shavings on the ground or wooden surfaces.

Carpenter bees resemble honeybees in appearance. However, the honeybee abdomen is covered in hairs while the carpenter bee abdomen is smooth and shiny. Female carpenter bees have a black face and have a stinger. Males have a white face and no stinger. Females tend not to sting unless provoked.

The life of a carpenter bee lasts one year. They overwinter as adults in tunnels they bore into wooden structures. In late spring, these adults emerge to mate and lay eggs. Female carpenter bees make “bee bread” by combining pollen with nectar. They place the bee bread in one of the tunnels and then lay an egg on top of it. They seal up that section of the tunnel and repeat the process six to ten more times. Larvae that hatch from the eggs take five to six weeks to reach maturity. In late summer, early fall, the mature bees emerge from the tunnels for a short period to eat before overwintering.

The tunnels are usually five to six inches long but can exceed that after multiple years of tunneling takes place. Secondary damage that can be even more severe occurs when woodpeckers attempt to reach the larvae inside the tunnels and peck gaping holes in the wood.

Carpenter bees tend to prefer soft, unpainted or weathered wood that is at least a couple of inches thick. Insecticides such as Sevin can be used to treat openings. On cool nights when bees are more likely to be inside their tunnels apply a spray or dust to the opening. Dusts are most easily applied with a puffer duster. Sprays will need to be reapplied after one to two weeks. Carpenter bee traps can be effective for smaller populations, but for larger areas, it requires many traps to be hung.

For more information, please contact the local K-State Research and Extension Office.  
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