

Practical Pest Prevention For Schools

Wasp and Bee Prevention

Important Steps

February

Plan to protect! Review past problems with pests.

June

Manage flowering plants

July

Check for nests on the building or in the ground

August—October

Trash bin maintenance

Teacher Information

Report those pests

Important Steps for Preventing Wasps and Bees in Schools

Plan to Protect: Review past problems and sightings of pests in the school

During the *Plan to Protect* step, create a list of places where wasps or bees have been reported in the past. This will be the starting point for preventing future pest issues.

Flowering plants

Throughout the summer, flowering plants will attract nectar feeding insects, such as honey bees, solitary bees and bumble bees. Insecticides should be avoided because bees are important for crop pollination and some insecticides picked up by foraging bees may affect the whole hive. If there is a risk of bee interaction with students or staff, there are three simple practices that can be considered to reduce this risk:

1. Remove the flowering plants and provide plants that are less attractive to bees. Seek the advice of a horticulturalist in the area.
2. Relocate these plants away from student and staff activity.
3. Restrict student access. Have school administration prevent student access to gardens while the plants are flowering.

Check for nests

Depending on the species, wasps and bees may nest on buildings and trees, or in the ground. If they are nesting on buildings they will find protected areas where the weather will not affect them. Checking the building overhangs, near doors, and eaves will allow for early detection of nests. Ground-nesting wasps and bees will form nests in bare patches in turf, under landscape plantings or next to “hardscape” items such as railway ties, stones or concrete walls. Ground nesting wasps and bees are harder to detect, but a careful inspection in areas of high student and staff activity will reduce most interactions.

Trash-bin maintenance

In late summer and early fall, wasp activity will increase around trash bins and dumpsters as natural food sources (e.g., aphids and other insects) begin to decline. Wasps may become more aggressive in travelling to food sources in an attempt to support a colony that has flourished over the summer. Increase frequency of trash collection during this time and clean up any spillage around the bins.

Respond to Teacher and Staff reports

Responding to a pest sighting is not just about applying some pesticide and reducing the number of pests. By being present, the pests are telling you that they have found suitable habitat they need to survive and grow. Ask your self and your pest management professional: “Why are these pests present?” The answer could be food, or hiding places or water. Knowing why they are present will help you determine how to permanently fix the situation.

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Control Methods:

It is critical to get an accurate identification of the bee or wasp that is causing the problem. A correct identification will ensure safe, effective and economical use of prevention and control measures. Below are some general steps for reducing risk of bee and wasp issues.

- As mentioned, management of landscape plantings will reduce most bee and student interactions.
- Regular inspections during the summer will detect potential problems earlier, nests will be smaller and more easily controlled with less insecticide.
- DO NOT use a ladder while approaching a nest, unless you are using protective gear. Injuries commonly occur when people fall from ladders to get away from aggressive wasps.
- For nests on buildings, use a short-acting insecticide such as Wasp Freeze® or a similar product that allows you to remain at a distance while applying the insecticide. In case you do not want to spray insecticide from a distance, there are extension poles that permit closer placement of the spray can to the nest. Apply treatment when no children are present. Once control has been achieved, use of a water stream to knock-down the nest; dispose of nest by sweeping it up and sealing it in a plastic bag.
- If the wasps or bees are nesting inside the building, consult a pest management professional. A dust or residual insecticide will need to be applied into the cracks or crevices where the insects are using (follow the insecticide label). Also, the size of the nest and how far it extends into the building will have to be determined. Nest removal may be necessary to prevent other pests, such as dermestid beetles or mice. Removal of bee hives is particularly important because the honey from large hives may seep through walls resulting in odors and more extensive damage.
- If the wasps or bees are nesting in-ground and their activity is close to students, consult a pest management professional. Some solitary wasps will simply nest in bare patches in the turf, while colonial wasps and bees will be deeper in the ground. For colonial insects “wasp sprays” will kill some insects, but the actual colony will have to be treated to prevent further activity.
- For chronic or repeated infestations, work with your pest management professional to determine if any other issues require correction to reduce or eliminate wasp and bee activity.



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