

# bepesticidefree problem pests : Wasps

## What are Wasps?

“Wasp” is actually a general term that applies to over 75,000 insect species. The common wasp (*Paravespula vulgaris*) can be distinguished by its yellow and black colour and its thin waist. You may also know wasps by other names like *hornet* or *yellow jacket*.

Wasps, although generally feared, play an important role in our ecosystem. They are a natural predator to many smaller insects as well as a consumer of flower nectar. As such, they play a very important role as pollinators. So keep in mind that wasps can be important in the lives of your flowers, vegetables AND fruit trees!



## Preventative Controls:



Do not leave any food or drink sitting around in your garden. Wasps are attracted to sugar, so any food or drink with sugar is going to attract wasps.

To prevent wasps from building a nest in an area near high traffic, rub/spray tea tree oil on any surface you think a wasp might build a nest on (i.e. Window sills, shed roofs). The smell of the tea tree oil will discourage the wasps.

- be proactive and rub tea tree oil on any potential wasp site in high traffic areas. Wasps love woody areas such as sheds, trees windows and stairs, but will also build in holes in hidden places such as under cement stairs or beneath rocks.
- Be vigilant. Keep an eye on the areas that wasps like to build their nests and stop them in the early stages of construction.
- **Wasps** are extremely territorial creatures. They also have great sight. Wasp colonies will send out foragers and scouts to look for uninhabited areas with food in which they can build a nest. Because wasps are so fiercely territorial, a scout wasp will generally stay away from an area with another colony already in it. People can take advantage of this behaviour by placing a “decoy” or a fake wasp nest in their yard! By hanging a fake wasp nest in areas where you spend a lot of time, you can keep wasps away. These types of devices can be found at some garden centres.
- **Remember though, wasps in your garden can be important pollinators and insect predators!**

## Mechanical Control

Wasps can sting and are capable of stinging multiple times. One should always exercise caution when attempting to remove individual wasps or nests. Since wasps tend to be much quieter early in the morning and late in the evening it is best to take action during these times of the day.

It is possible that even if you have been unaffected previously, you can develop an allergic reaction to wasp venom over time. Always work with a partner, and

## How to Identify

Wasps and bees can be difficult to tell apart:

Both wasps and bees:  
-are yellow and black,  
-have wings  
-have a thin waist.

However, bees are usually much rounder in shape and are quite ‘hairy’; whereas wasps are longer, narrower, and have no visible ‘hairs’. Wasps are capable of stinging multiple times; whereas bees sting only once and then die.



A decoy, or a fake wasp nest like this one, may help prevent wasps from building a nest in your area. Find the **Waspinator** at your local home and garden centre.

if you feel uncomfortable you may need to hire a natural organic pest control service to remove the nest for you.

**Established wasp nests** can be removed by using a broom or a shovel to either knock the nest down or remove the nest completely. Likely, the wasps will simply move on and build somewhere else! Seal the removed nest in a plastic garbage bag. Wear long sleeves and pants when doing this.

- To reduce the number of wasps in the nest first, fill a shop vacuum with hot soapy water. Set the nozzle near the nest entrance and turn it on. The wasps will be sucked into the vacuum and will drown.
- To prevent them from rebuilding in the same place, apply tea tree oil to the surface.
- Another option is to spray the nest with a solution of mint extract, alcohol and water.

**If the wasp nest is hidden in a cement step or under a rock**, you can try pouring/squirting a solution of biodegradable soapy water into the wasp entrance late at night. The soap sticks to their wings making them unable to fly. You can also try to use a shop vacuum filled with hot soapy water. Set the nozzle near the nest entrance and turn it on. The wasps will be sucked into the vacuum and will drown.

**Wasp Traps** are another easy mechanical control to a wasp problem you may have. Wasp traps must have a lure (usually a small piece of meat or a sweet liquid) which draws the wasp in. Once the wasp enters the trap, it is unable to leave and dies. Wasp traps are available at most garden centres.

#### Make your own Wasp Trap:

It is VERY easy to recycle your old plastic pop bottles and create your own wasp trap. Just follow these steps:

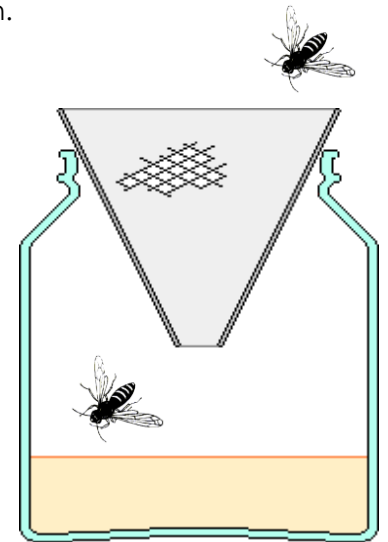
#### What you'll need:

- plastic pop bottle (any size)
- scissors
- tape or staples
- a lure (soda pop, or sugar water)

#### Instructions

1. Cut the top of the pop bottle off about one third down from the top.
2. Place the lure into the bottom portion of the bottle.
3. Flip the top of the pop bottle so that the mouth (the part you drink from) is now inside the bottle (make sure that the mouth is not touching the bottom as this is where the wasp will enter)
4. Tape or staple the 2 parts together (remember you will have to dismantle it to remove dead wasps)
5. Fill bottom of bottle with "lure" (orange soda pop is well recommended)
6. Hang or place the trap as desired.

NOTE that trapping wasps will not rid your yard of wasps. It will help reduce the population in the area where the trap is placed. Knowing this, you may choose to place one on your patio, however, since wasps are drawn to the lure in the bottle-trap, you could place it away from your patio, to draw the wasps away from you - as a decoy.



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For more information on Wasps, visit:

[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/pest/\\_pnotes/wasps-guepes/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/pest/_pnotes/wasps-guepes/index-eng.php)

Images from: <http://www.topnews.in/health/files/wasp.jpg>, <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/gif/simontrapx.gif>

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