

**Order:** Hymenoptera  
**Family:** Formicidae  
**Genus/Species:** *Camponotus* spp.

**Description:** Carpenter ants are among the largest ants found in homes. They live in colonies consisting of winged and wingless queens, winged males, & different sized workers. The size varies from  $\frac{1}{4}$ " small minor workers to  $\frac{3}{4}$ " winged queens. Carpenter ants have a smooth rounded arched (convex) shape to the thorax when viewed from the side, and the pedicel between the thorax and abdomen consisting of only one segment or node. They have elbowed antenna. Adults are usually black, with some species red, brown or yellow occurring on parts of their body. Eggs are about  $\frac{1}{8}$ " cream colored and oval. Larvae are legless and grub-like, later pupating in tough silken, tan-colored cocoons erroneously referred to as "ant eggs".

**Habitat:** Carpenter Ant colonies are found in forested areas, logs, trees, and wooden structures.

**Life Cycle:** Workers forage for insects or household foodstuffs for food. Reproductives are winged forms and are present in the colony during winter and swarm during the first warm days in the spring. The reproductives may wander into a house in the spring but this does not mean a colony has been established there. The queen and males fly from the colony, mate and then the male dies. The inseminated queen builds a small nest, lays a few eggs, and nurtures the larvae that soon hatch. When adult workers appear, they assume caring for the queen, the larvae, building the nest and bringing in food. Colonies may persist for 20 years or more.

**Economic Importance & Management:** Carpenter Ants are the most important structural pest in most areas of the PNW because of their habit of constructing nests inside dwellings. They attack both decayed wood and sound wood. They do not eat the wood, but burrow into it to provide a cleared area in which to raise their brood. The moisture in their food and waste products also hastens the decay of the wood. Their presence may be noted by small piles of sawdust outside of entrance holes in the wood. Remedial measures should include the location of the colony, the removal of all infested material. Rotted wood should be replaced by sound wood. Control of Carpenter ants is best left to competent pest control operators (PCO). They have access to products that homeowners do not, and they have the experience necessary to locate nests. See PNW Insect Management handbook for more information.

**References:** *PNW Insect Management Handbook*  
*Identification and Habits of Key Ant Pests of Washington* EBO61 Cooperative Extension, Washington State University, 1992.  
Photo, Clemson University

