

Wasps

The life of a wasp

In spring a queen wasp will build a nest out of a paper like material made from wood she has chewed, this is about the size of a golf ball. Wasps will build a nest in a void such as the roof space of a house, garden shed, inside a hollow tree or in a bank of earth. She lays eggs within the nest and will feed the newly hatched grubs until they are ready to pupate and change into worker adults.

Around July the workers take over the task of building the nest and the queen continues laying eggs. The nest may grow to the size of a football and can contain thousands of wasps.

In late summer the production of workers changes to the production of queens. The workers start to die off in the colder autumn months and the newly fertilised queens exit the nest and find a place to a suitable place to hibernate over the winter ready to repeat the cycle the following year. Wasps will rarely re-use the previous year's nest.

Treating wasps

Although this is a job best left to professionals and our advice is not to tackle the problem yourself, it may be possible to treat a smaller early season nest yourself.

Dealing with a wasp nest can be dangerous and they will defend the nest if disturbed or aggravated. Wasp stings are very painful and can cause intense swelling and severe allergic reactions in some people.

Detailing the many situations that a wasp nest can be found in and the way that they can be treated safely and effectively as a professional would approach them would be too numerous to describe.

Basic advice should you decide that you are confident that you can tackle a wasp nest safely and effectively yourself is;

- Buy an appropriate insecticide which is suitable for use against wasps and the location of where the nest is. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.
- Wear protective clothing.
- Wait until dusk. Wasps are less active in the dark.

A nest will generally have one entrance and there will be a distinct flight path to and from it. Some plants, trees and shrubs can be seen to have a large amount of activity around them and does not necessarily mean that there is a nest at that location. Wasps forage around plants and it is more likely that they will be looking for food.

Treating plants indiscriminately should be avoided as it will not solve the problem and as most insecticides do not distinguish between one insect and another they will kill other insects that forage or feed off the plants such as Bees.