



## All About Carpenter Ants

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Do you see any ants in your house? Do you immediately think you have termites? Of course; we all dread the thought of finding termites, because we know they can cause so much hidden damage to our homes. Carpenter ants and termites can be confused because termites do look like ants to the uneducated eye. A couple of ways for you to tell: termite wings are twice as long as the body, and have a broad waisted appearance (a straight rather than segmented body), and straight antennae. Carpenter ants have segmented bodies, elbowed antennae, and smaller wings. You can't just go by the wings, because there are winged and non-winged versions of each pest. It's also interesting to note that the carpenter ant likes eating termites, so you won't find them co-habiting in the same area. I'm not sure if this is good or bad. It would be great to find a natural enemy of the termite, but the carpenter ants cause enough damage of their own, and so is not a good candidate for this job.

If you are looking at what you think are ants in your home, you should definitely call a qualified pest control company. If you think they are carpenter ants and do some simple baiting or spraying, and the little guys turn out to be termites . . . you get the picture.

So what about the carpenter ants? Like carpenter bees, they do not eat wood (like termites do). But they do chew through the wood to make their nests, just like the carpenter bees, and can do a lot of damage, including structural damage, to your home. Do you see a trail of sawdust on your deck under an eave? Then you probably have carpenter bees or ants.

Carpenter ants are among the largest ants found in buildings. Winged male and female carpenter ants (known as swarmers) emerge from colonies from early Spring through mid-Summer. Although they like soft, moist wood outside, they will find ways into your home if they think there is food to be consumed. Nests can contain as many as 4,000 ants, and they make a distinct rustling noise inside your home. You weren't "hearing things" after all – it's the ants!

Once the pest control company has determined that your ants are carpenter ants, and applied professional baits, you should control them in the future by doing the following: keep tree branches trimmed back from your roof (the ants use the branches to reach your house); check your house and trim for any moisture or wood rot and get it fixed; keep the gutters clean and free-flowing (so as to not hold moisture against the trim); and do not stack firewood next to your house (will be hard to see your siding to inspect it, and will invite termites), and check seals around doors and windows. Carpenter ants (and termites) love moisture, especially wet wood, so keep everything dry and well maintained. No more invitations to enter your home! Now you know.

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