

Carpenter Ants

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Each January and February, pest management companies around the Brazos Valley get frantic calls from terrified folks worried that their New Year has begun with a house-engulfing swarm of termites. “They look like winged ants, to they’re termites, right?” they ask. Actually, they are ants...carpenter ants. Unlike termites, carpenter ants do not actually eat wood. They mainly eat other insects. Carpenter ants damage wood by tunneling into it for nesting. There are many species of carpenter ants, but the most common species in the Brazos Valley are red and black in color and are quite large compared to other kinds of ants. There is also a solid black species, though not as common.

Like other ant species and termites, carpenter ants have a reproductive flight each year, known as a swarm. Using environmental conditions, different colonies are coordinated to swarm at around the same time. This coordination allows the newly crowned kings and queens from one colony to meet up with new kings and queens from other colonies. After mating, the male dies and the female seeks a location to start a new colony. For carpenter ants in the Brazos Valley, swarming usually occurs in January and February. Termites in our area usually swarm in April, right around the time of the Aggie Football Maroon and White Game!

Control of carpenter ants is much easier and less expensive than control of termites. Controlling termites involves either installation of bait stations or trenching and drilling around the infested structure for treatment with a liquid insecticide. This can cost thousands of dollars to accomplish and is disruptive to your household. Carpenter ants, on the contrary, can usually be controlled using a single exterior application of a liquid insecticide and granular bait.

The most popular insecticide used by pest management professionals for carpenter ant control is a non-repellent insecticide. The non-repellency is the key to its effectiveness. Carpenter ants travel back and forth from main colonies to satellite colonies around your property. These commuting ants crawl mindlessly over treated surfaces and carry the insecticide back to the colony. Typically, an outside perimeter treatment will wipe out ants on both the outside and inside of the house.

As with many ant species, bait may be used to control carpenter ants. Pest management professionals usually use bait in combination with a non-repellent insecticide. This is because carpenter ants colonies change their food preferences often and may not always accept the bait. If they are accepting of the bait, they will carry it back to the colony and share it with their friends.

This spring, if you find yourself covered in flying insects, don’t panic! Call a pest management professional. Most companies will identify the problem for no charge and offer a bid for control. Expect the cost to range from \$95 to \$150 and expect re-treatment warranties to range from 3 months to 1 year in length.

