

# CONTROLLING YELLOWJACKETS AROUND YOUR HOME

## CONTROL YELLOWJACKETS AROUND YOUR HOME WITH THESE ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS

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| <b>Traps</b> | <b>Rescue!</b>   | Disposable Yellowjacket Trap, Reusable Yellowjacket Trap, OrnamenTrap Yellowjacket Trap                                |
|              | <b>Victor</b>    | Yellow Jacket Trap With Bait, Poison Free Yellow Jacket and Flying Insect Trap With Bait                               |
|              | <b>Seabright</b> | Yellow Jacket and Wasp Trap and Bait: (800) 284-7363, <a href="http://www.seabrightlabs.com">www.seabrightlabs.com</a> |

Yellowjackets can be annoying and intimidating pests at picnics and around the barbecue, especially in late summer. On the positive side, they prey on many other insect pests such as caterpillars and flies.

Before you take steps to get rid of yellowjackets around your house or yard, be sure the problem is yellowjackets! Less aggressive flying insects, such as paper wasps, mud daubers, and honeybees, are often mistaken for yellowjackets.

### YELLOWJACKET OR PAPER WASP?

Most often, paper wasps are mistaken for yellowjackets. Yellowjackets are shorter and rounder than paper wasps. A paper wasp's body is longer and thinner, with long, dangling legs. Yellowjacket nests are round



*Yellowjacket*



*Paper wasp*



*Yellowjacket nest*



*Paper wasp nest*

Yellowjackets don't usually sting when they are looking for food—unless their nest is disturbed by a direct blow or the wasps inside detect vibrations. Mowing the lawn near an underground nest, construction work near a nest in a wall void, or even walking near a nest can provoke an attack by one or more yellowjackets. This is especially true if the nest has been disturbed before.

and are enclosed in a papery shell with a small entrance hole at the bottom. They build their nests in abandoned rodent burrows and other holes in the ground, in attics, in wall voids, and in shrubs and trees. Sometimes they hang their nests from eaves. Paper wasp nests usually hang from eaves or porch ceilings and look like tiny umbrellas filled with six-sided cells.

### GETTING RID OF YELLOWJACKETS

If you often find several yellowjackets in your home, you may have a nest inside your walls. To protect yourself and your family from getting stung, call your local vector control district or a pest control company for help getting rid of the nest. Look for a pest control company that specializes in less-toxic pest control methods.

The pest control professional should only need to use poison bait if you have very large numbers of yellowjackets.



Choose eco-friendly products for your home and garden. Look for this symbol before you buy.

Keep yellowjackets from building a nest in your house.

- Seal holes and cracks in foundations, walls, roofs, and eaves.
- Cover attic and crawl space vents with fine mesh insect screen.
- Yellowjackets scavenge for meat and sweet foods and drinks in outdoor garbage and recycling bins. **Clean recyclables before throwing them in the bin and keep garbage cans clean and tightly covered.**



## TRAPPING YELLOWJACKETS

Trapping can help control yellowjackets if there aren't too many. You can find both disposable and reusable traps in home and garden centers.

- Follow label directions for setting traps, disposing of trapped yellowjackets, and cleaning reusable traps.
- A few hours before you bring food outdoors, set traps around the edge of your yard. Make sure traps are well away from picnic areas, to lure yellowjackets away from people and food.
- If one of the traps is not attracting yellowjackets, move it. If you see yellowjackets but none of the traps is attracting them, try changing the bait.
  - In the spring and early summer, yellowjackets are looking for protein. Use strong-smelling baits such as tuna-flavored cat food.
  - In late summer and fall, yellowjackets need sugar. Use grenadine, or the sweet-smelling bait that comes with the traps.
- Putting out traps in early spring may capture queens and reduce the number of nests in the area.



## AVOIDING YELLOWJACKET STINGS

If you have a yellowjacket in your house, do NOT make the yellowjacket mad by swatting at it! Wait until it lands on a flat surface, and then place a glass or plastic container over the insect. Slide a stiff piece of paper under the opening of the container and either seal the container and place it in the freezer overnight to kill the yellowjacket, or take the covered container outside and release the insect.

When a yellowjacket comes near:

- **Stay calm—or at least move slowly.** Slow, gentle motions that mimic the movement of a branch in the breeze will be more likely to get the yellowjacket to leave.
- **You can brush a yellowjacket off with a piece of paper or some other object** as long as you move slowly and deliberately.
- **Do not squash a yellowjacket.** When crushed, many kinds of yellowjackets give off a chemical that can cause other nearby yellowjackets to attack.

Yellowjackets can be a problem in May and June, but they are most irritable and aggressive late in the summer. Follow these tips to help prevent stings:

- **Wear protective clothing when mowing grass** if you think there might be underground nests nearby.
- **Outdoors, keep soft drinks or other sugary drinks in closed containers.** Use cups with lids and straws, and always look before you sip. Do not carry snacks containing meat or sugar in open containers.
- **Do not wear perfumes.** Use unscented products on your hair and body.
- **Avoid going barefoot,** especially when walking on grass or other groundcover.
- **Always check for yellowjackets on wet towels or wet clothing left outside before you pick them up.**
- **Wear light-colored clothing without patterns.**
- **If you are allergic to yellowjacket stings, avoid outdoor cooking and eating,** and wear clothing that covers as much skin as possible. Carry an epinephrine kit (available by prescription) at all times.



[WWW.OURWATEROURWORLD.ORG](http://WWW.OURWATEROURWORLD.ORG)

Common home and garden pesticides are found in stormwater runoff, treated wastewater, and in local waterways, sometimes at levels that can harm sensitive aquatic life. **Our Water Our World** is a joint effort by water pollution prevention agencies, participating retail stores, and pesticide distributors and manufacturers—working together to reduce the risks associated with pesticide use.

**Our Water Our World** fact sheets and store displays educate residents about less-toxic pest management. For the rest of the series of fact sheets, visit [www.OurWaterOurWorld.org](http://www.OurWaterOurWorld.org). Look for the *Eco-friendly* tag next to less-toxic products in participating stores and nurseries. See the *Pesticides and Water Quality* fact sheet for information on active ingredients in common pesticides that may cause water quality problems.

Pest control strategies and methods described in this publication are consistent with integrated pest management (IPM) concepts, and are based on scientific studies and tests in actual home and garden settings. Use suggested products according to label directions and dispose of unwanted or leftover pesticides at a household hazardous waste collection facility or event. For more information on pesticide disposal, visit [www.earth911.com](http://www.earth911.com). No endorsement of specific brand name products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not mentioned.

For more information, contact:

Bio-Integral Resource Center (BIRC), 510.524.2567, [www.birc.org](http://www.birc.org)  
University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners in your area  
University of California IPM website, [www.ipm.ucan.edu](http://www.ipm.ucan.edu)