

## Carpenter Bees

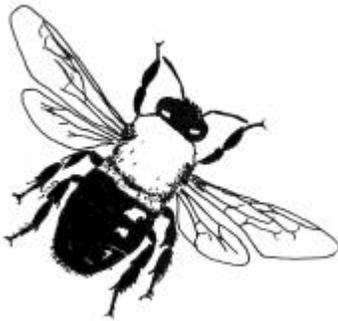
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*Xylocopa* species; Family: Anthophoridae; Subfamily: Xylocopinae

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Carpenter Bee



Wood damage: tunnel (with cells for larvae).

Photo from [www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)

USDA Forest Service, Wood Products Insect  
Lab Archives, USDA Forest Station.

### Injury

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Carpenter bees bore into wood to make a home for the young. In preferred sites, bees can drill a large number of holes. A common species in the Northeast, *Xylocopa virginica*, drills holes 1/2 inch in diameter. Often the same nesting sites are used year after year, and the same tunnels are reused. The damage is primarily to fascia boards. Nail holes, exposed saw cuts, and unpainted wood are attractive nesting sites to these insects. Porches, garages, shed ceilings and trim, railings, roof overhangs and outdoor wooden furniture, are all common nesting sites. Continued borings may weaken some wooden structures, and the yellow "sawdust and pollen" waste materials may stain cars, clothing, or furniture.

### Behavior

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The males are territorial, and in the spring they often guard the potential nest sites. They discourage intruders by hovering or darting at any moving thing that ventures into the nesting area. This can create a "human annoyance" factor, and it is one that often startles and concerns the homeowner.

However, male carpenter bees do not sting. The female carpenter bee, like many other bees, can sting -- but it is uncommon for her to do so.

### Description

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Carpenter bees of the genus *Xylocopa* are large black and yellow insects about one inch long that closely resemble bumblebees. The thorax is covered with yellowish hairs. The abdomen is mostly a shiny black, with few hairs (in contrast, bumblebees often have a band of yellow or orange hairs on the abdomen).

