



The VOICE

A Newsletter for the
Residents of Teravista

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CARPENTER ANTS



Carpenter ants nest outdoors in dead wood (tree stumps or dead limbs, fences, firewood, etc.). They may also be found in wood siding, beams, joists, fascia boards or trim on structures. Damage is usually limited since carpenter ants tunnel and nest within wood; they do not eat wood. However, wood can become weakened by carpenter ant excavation.

Carpenter ants are large ants that can vary in color from all black to reddish to yellowish or a combination of colors. These ants have one node, no stinger and a circle of hairs at the tip of their abdomen.

Galleries in the nest are excavated following the grain of the wood and have clean, smooth walls. Nest locations may be discovered by searching for piles of sawdust-looking material under exit holes. Sawdust is coarse and may also contain soil or sand, uneaten insects as well as dead ants from the colony.

Carpenter ants are able to enter homes from tree branches or utility lines touching the home, through cracks and crevices around windows and doors, cracks in foundation walls, ventilation openings or heating and air conditioning ducts.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR A CARPENTER ANT INFESTATION:

- Remove dead trees and/ or limbs and remove tree stumps from the landscape. Many times you can remove the (possible) nesting sites and get rid of the ants without using pesticides.
- Prune trees and shrubs that touch the home. Carpenter ants will often use these areas as a bridge to enter the home.
- Replace wood that is water damaged. Carpenter ants are drawn to moisture damaged wood, so make sure to repair any water leaks and replace damaged wood.
- Remove wood debris and firewood that is near the home. Carpenter ants may nest in firewood and when it is stacked right next to the home, it allows the ants to enter more easily.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

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Fire.....	911
Ambulance	911
Round Rock Police (Non Emergency)	512-218-5515
Georgetown Police (Non Emergency).....	512-390-3510
Travis County Animal Control	512-972-6060
Round Rock Animal Control	512-218-5500
Georgetown Animal Control.....	512-930-3592

SCHOOLS

Round Rock ISD	512-464-5000
Teravista Elementary School.....	512-704-0500
Hopewell Middle School.....	512-464-5200
Stony Point High School.....	512-428-7000
Georgetown ISD	512-943-5000
Carver Elementary School.....	512-943-5070
Pickett Elementary School.....	512-943-5050
Tippit Middle School	512-943-5040
Georgetown High School.....	512-943-5100

UTILITIES

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TXU Energy	1-800-818-6132
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Billing.....	1-800-858-7928
Time Warner Cable	
Customer Service.....	512-485-5555
Repairs.....	512-485-5080

OTHER NUMBERS

City of Round Rock.....	512-218-5400
Round Rock Community Library	512-218-7000
Round Rock Parks and Recreation	512-218-5540
City of Georgetown.....	512-930-3652
Georgetown Public Library	512-930-3551
Georgetown Municipal Airport	512-930-3666
Georgetown Parks and Recreation	512-930-3595
Teravista Golf and Ranch House	512-651-9850
Teravista Residents Club	512-310-7421

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NATUREWATCH

by Jim and Lynne Weber

WHAT GALL!

In nature, galls refer not to brazen behavior but to abnormal outgrowths on the surface of certain life forms. Plant galls, or cecidia, can be caused by various parasites from fungi to bacteria as well as by insects and mites. In the United States there are over 2000 species of gall-inducing insects, and the majority are reported to form galls on oak trees.

The formation of a gall begins with the hatching of the eggs of certain wasp species laid on the plant. It progresses when the larvae (or the adult female) injects chemicals into the plant, and the tissue swells in reaction, forming a spherical microhabitat around the larvae. The gall's purpose is twofold, providing the larvae with nutrients and protecting them from predators. Once fully grown, the all-female, adult insects bore an exit hole out to the surface of the gall and disperse.

While usually forming in the spring when the most rapid plant cell division occurs, galls initially appear light green in color but become even more noticeable in the fall when oak trees drop their leaves. Dull, dry, and brown, the spent galls are often scavenged by mammals searching for leftover food as winter approaches.

Gall-inducing insects are usually species-specific and sometimes even tissue-specific (branches, leaves, buds, roots) in the plants they select. In central Texas, most of the gall-inducing insects are gall wasps, and while they are closely associated with several species of our native oaks, they can also be identified by the types of galls they produce.

In general, you may find leaf galls with orangish 'hair' formed by the Hedgehog gall wasp, and sticky, spongy galls on twigs with seed-like structures inside formed by the Wool sower gall wasp. On live oaks, you can find woody twig and stem galls formed by the Mealy oak gall wasp, and leaf galls formed by the Woolly leaf gall wasp. The oak apple wasp, however, prefers our red oaks and forms spherical, spongy-filled galls.

Gall-making insects are generally not considered pests, and some galls are even considered attractive and are used in flower arrangements and other crafts. While certain species may cause some aesthetic damage to a plant such as leaf discoloration or early defoliation, most of these insects do not permanently damage the host plant, but just use them to further their own purpose. What gall!

Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, check out our blog at:

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Hedgehog gall on white oak (photo by J. Hahn)



Hedgehog gall on white oak (photo by J. Hahn)



Hedgehog gall on white oak (photo by J. Hahn)

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THE VOICE

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