

Stinging Insects of Allergenic Importance



Red Imported Fire Ant
Solenopsis invicta

- Southern states and Pacific Coast
- 1/16-1/4" (1-6mm)
- Sting produces painful burning sensation
- Reddish-brown females, darker males
- 18" mounds in sunny, open areas



Black Imported Fire Ant
Solenopsis richteri

- Southern states and Pacific Coast
- 1/16-1/4" (1-6mm)
- Sting produces painful burning sensation
- Reddish-brown females, darker males
- 18" mounds in sunny, open areas



Yellow Hornet
Dolichovespula arenaria

- North America, excluding Plains states
- 1/2" (12mm)
- Black and yellow bands on abdomen
- Stings repeatedly
- Nests hang from trees, shrubs, and eaves
- Nests have open cells, visible from below

Image from Department of Environment Biology, University of Guelph



Golden Paper Wasp
Polistes fuscatus ssp. aurifer

- North America, predominantly the East
- 5/8 - 7/8" (16-21 mm)
- Yellow head and body
- First abdominal segment is dark reddish-brown with bands of yellow
- Rarely aggressive, but stings if provoked
- Papery nests with open cells hang from trees and buildings



Baldfaced Hornet
Dolichovespula maculata

- Northern-half of the United States
- 5/8-3/4" (16-19mm)
- Black abdomen with black and white patterns on face, thorax, and abdomen
- Stings repeatedly if disturbed
- 12" or larger nests in trees, shrubs and under eaves



Red Paper Wasp
Polistes annularis

- Eastern and Midwestern states
- 5/8 - 7/8" (16-21 mm)
- Mahogany brown head and thorax with darker brown, black and yellow markings on the abdomen
- Rarely aggressive, but stings if provoked
- Papery nests with open cells hang from trees and buildings

Image from Department of Environment Biology, University of Guelph



Common Paper Wasp
Polistes exclamans

- Throughout the U.S., Canada, and Mexico
- 1/2-5/8" (12-16 mm)
- Reddish brown, yellow markings, stripes
- Rarely aggressive, but stings if provoked
- Papery nests with open cells hang from trees and buildings



Black Paper Wasp
Polistes fuscatus

- North America, predominantly the East
- 1/2-1" (13-25 mm)
- Amber-black with yellow rings on the abdomen and brown wings
- Stings if provoked
- Papery nests with open cells hang from trees and buildings



Common Brown Paper Wasp
Polistes metricus

- Texas and Eastern states
- 5/8 - 7/8" (16-21 mm)
- Reddish brown with black and yellow markings on abdomen
- Rarely aggressive but stings if provoked
- Papery nests with open cells hang from trees and buildings



Eastern Yellow Jacket
Vespula maculifrons

- Eastern North America
- 3/8-1/2" (9.5-12 mm)
- Black and yellow markings
- Stings repeatedly when threatened
- Tan, papery nests are usually located underground in deciduous forests



Honey Bee
Apis mellifera

- Worldwide
- 3/8-5/8" (9.5-16 mm)
- Light brown-to-black
- Yellow and black banded abdomen and thorax covered with dense hairs
- Honey Bees live in managed hives kept by beekeepers or in hollow trees



Common Yellow Jacket
Vespula vulgaris

- North America, especially Western and Northeastern states
- 3/8-1/2" (9.5-12 mm)
- Black and yellow stripes
- Four yellow spots on the thorax
- A rear, black diamond
- Stings repeatedly if provoked
- Spherical, pale, papery nests near coniferous trees

Image from Department of Environment Biology, University of Guelph



German Yellow Jacket
Vespula germanica

- Eastern and Western United States
- 1/2-5/8" (12-16 mm)
- Black spots on the abdomen or strong protrusions of black from black stripes
- Bold, aggressive and sting repeatedly
- Large, papery soccer ball-shaped nests underground or in wall voids, attics, etc.

Image from Department of Environment Biology, University of Guelph



Southern Yellow Jacket
Vespula squamosa

- Eastern United States
- 1/2" (12mm)
- Black with yellow markings
- Stings repeatedly when threatened
- Nests in the ground have the appearance of paper cartons



Western Yellow Jacket
Vespula pensylvanica

- Western North America
- 1/2-5/8" (12-16 mm)
- Yellow with some black
- Stings repeatedly when threatened
- Usually nest underground but occasionally in wall voids and attics



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