

Fact Sheet #9 – Paper Wasps



Polistes humilis

Description

Growing to about 15mm, this stinging insect should not be confused with its much more aggressive “look-a-like” – the European Wasp. Paper Wasps have orange antennae (not black), a more slender body and nest above ground. Wasps are most active in summer.

Habitat

The adult wasps are attracted to water, and sugary substances produced by many flowering plants. Up to 20 wasps attend to a multiple hexagonal chambered, paper cone-shaped nest reaching up to 120mm in diameter and being held to a rigid surface (e.g. fence capping) by a stem. One adult wasp emerges from each chamber.

Biology

Wasps are most prevalent in summer and many die in the colder weather of winter. Adult wasps feed on nectar whilst the larvae are fed chewed-up caterpillars.

What you can do to limit infestation:

- Ensure that children and pets are kept well clear of wasp nests.
- If wasps are about, ensure that any soft drinks, beers or wines are served in clear glass or clear plastic cups – wasps will frequently enter open cans and bottles, and can be extremely dangerous if swallowed.
- Keep areas dry – eliminate standing water, fix leaking taps, remove all sources of free water (particularly important in hot weather).
- If possible reduce the number of flowers in the garden, as many wasps are nectar-feeders, so this will encourage them to go elsewhere for a food source.







If you get an infestation:

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