

How to get rid of mud daubers



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Mud daubers, also known as dirt daubers, are a nuisance but are not hard to get rid of.

They build their home away from rainfall in places like under overhangs, hollow trees, and on the undersides of large tree limbs. Mud daubers, of course, also build their homes under carports, attics, patios, as well as under covered areas housing automobiles, boats, and other equipment. Mud dauber nests are very unsightly, and the mud can stain walls and ceilings. Even worse, mud dauber nests built in the wrong place on an infrequently used machine, such as the muffler of an old ATV, can cause a lot of mechanical

damage when the machine is used.

The nests of organ pipe mud daubers are easy to distinguish from nests of black and yellow mud daubers. Organ pipe mud daubers nests are mud tubes up to six or more inches long and are oriented vertically. Black and yellow mud dauber nests are blockier in shape, only a couple of inches long, and usually oriented horizontally. Both species fill the cells of their nests with spiders they capture using a precisely placed paralyzing sting. A single egg is deposited in each cell before it is sealed, and the developing larva dines on spiders until they are large enough to pupate. Once mature, the young wasp exits the nest by cutting a hole through the side.

When they are not hauling mud and building their nests, females are busy hunting spiders. The male's job is to guard the nest. There are species of

wasps that specialize in parasitizing mud daubers. There are tiny, gnat-sized wasps, *Melittobia*, that lurk around the entrance waiting on a chance to dart in and lay their eggs. Another of these is the small, metallic green wasp known as the cuckoo wasp. Males must guard against rival males and other females that might try to steal spiders or take over the nest. You may observe a nest under construction, and you will probably notice the male resting just inside the entrance. You may even notice one or more of the parasitic wasps waiting nearby.

Folks have asked, "Do mud daubers sting?" Yes, and the stings are very painful, however mud daubers are not aggressive and do not defend their nests. So, stings are rare and only occurs when a female is trapped some way, against the skin.

As for controlling mud daubers, there is no simple, once-and-done method. The best way to limit the number of nests under your carport or porch is to kill nesting females as soon as they appear. You can use a fly swatter to apply mechanical control, or spray them or the entrance to their nest with a can of wasp spray. Be careful with this, because some sprays contain petroleum products that can stain walls. Some aerosol insecticides come with a special straw that makes it easy to spray into the nest entrance without getting much spray on walls and ceilings.

Nests are easily to remove just by scraping them off and using a wet cloth and a spray bottle filled with water to remove the remaining mud. Keeping mud daubers out is the best way of preventing mud daubers nests in attics and mechanical equipment.

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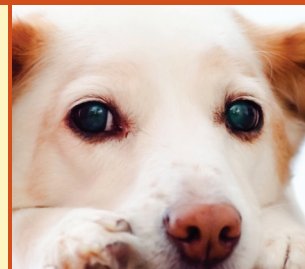
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