

WASPS: The Misunderstood 'Pollinator'

Native wasps come in a wide array of sizes, shapes, and colors. They are also varied in lifestyles, the places they frequent, the nests they build, the flowers they visit, and their season of activity.

Wasps have elongated bodies and generally sport bold coloring of black, yellow, orange, or creamy white, with little hair. As a result, they are much less efficient at pollinating flowers, because pollen is less likely to stick to their bodies and be moved from flower to flower.

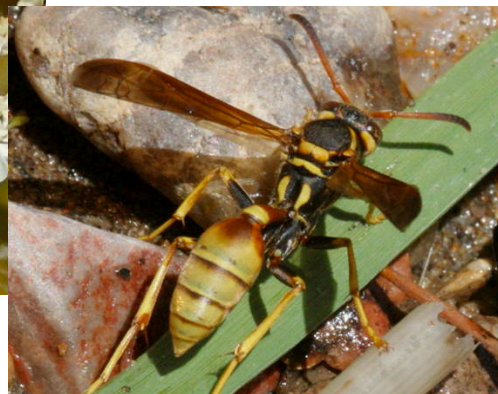
Although often feared, there is a lot to like about wasps! In fact, wasps are beneficial insect predators, and are usually non-aggressive unless trapped or their nest is disturbed.



Although part of the ecosystem, be cautious about Western Yellow Jackets, which usually build nests in the ground. Look for a black anchor mark on top of the abdomen as the best field identification clue.



Common Eastern
(non-native) and
Western Paper Wasp



THE VALUE OF WASPS

Gardners and consumers have become more interested in growing and eating locally-produced food grown in a balanced natural setting. Therefore, it is important to recognize that wasps are great at pest control, keeping pests like cut-mites, aphids, thrips, cockroaches, and grasshoppers at bay in your garden.

Predatory wasps prey on other insects, and also eat dead things in the garden. Parasitic wasps lay their eggs in other insects, and the wasp larvae consume their host as they mature.

Resources:

<https://greennature.com/oregon-wasps/>

Colorado State Extension,
yellow jacket and wasp spring control

<https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/animals/wasps.shtml>

Photos: Green Nature