







Characteristics of common wasps and bees

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While easily confused at a distance or without close observation, there are many **different characteristics of common large bees and wasps** that can be used to identify them.

	<u>Bees</u>		<u>Wasps</u>			
	<u>Western Honey Bee</u>	<u>Bumble Bee</u>	<u>Yellow Jacket</u>	<u>Paper Wasp</u>	<u>Bald-faced Hornet</u>	<u>European hornet</u>
						
Colors	Brown with black stripes. Pattern & color varies to mostly black.	Yellow with black stripes, sometimes with red tail, to dark.	Black and opaque bright yellow stripes.	Dusty yellow to dark brown or black.	Black and ivory white markings.	Black and dark body with yellow.
Coat	Furry (short hair).	Furry (long hair).		Little or no hair.		Some hair.
Size	1.3 cm (0.51 in)	≥ 2.5 cm (0.98 in)	1.3 cm (0.51 in)	1.9 to 2.5 cm (0.75 to 0.98 in)	up to 1.9 cm (0.75 in)	up to 3.5 cm (1.4 in)
Legs	Not generally visible while flying, except when pollen baskets are full.		Two longest legs are visible hanging down during flight. There are no pollen baskets.			
Behavior	Gentle. ^{[1][2]}	Gentle. ^[2]	Aggressive. ^[2]	Gentle. ^[2]	Aggressive. ^[2]	Gentle. ^{[2][3]}
Food	Pollen and nectar from flowers.		Other insects, overripe fruit, sugary drinks, meat. ^[4]		Other insects.	
Sting	Kills the bee, ^[5] continues pumping (barbed).	Retracts; can repeat (smooth).		Retracts; can repeat (smooth).		
Lives in	Flat layers of wax honeycomb hanging vertically within a cavity above ground.	Small cavities in the soil.	Small umbrella-shaped papery combs hanging horizontally in protected spaces such as attics, eaves or soil cavities.		Large paper nest, upside down pear shaped, hanging from branches / eaves. ^[6]	Very large paper nest in hollow trees, sheltered positions. ^[7]

Notes

1. Domesticated honey bees have been selected over time for gentleness. There are several races of domesticated honey bees with varying characteristics of honey production, disease resistance and gentleness. The “Killer Bee” or Africanized honey bee has spread north from Brazil through Mexico and across a few of the southern United States. They have not adapted to survive the winters of Pennsylvania therefore are unlikely to be found here.
2. Aggressive hive defense.
3. Hornet species other than European hornet have a more toxic sting and are more aggressive.
4. Yellow jackets are carnivorous during the brood rearing part of the season. They feed insects to their brood, and obtain the sugar for their flight-muscle energy mostly from secretions of the brood. During this time they can be attracted to traps baited with meat or fish. Near the end of summer, when brood rearing ceases and this sugar source is no longer available, yellow jackets become frantic for sugar, and can be baited with sugar-based baits. They are also much more likely to visit fall flowers for nectar, than they are earlier in the season.
5. Since the barbed stinger evolved as a colony defense against vertebrates, the invariable outcome of stinging a mammal or bird is that the stinger becomes lodged in the victim's skin and tears free from the honey bee's body, leading to her death within minutes. As such, there is rarely any evolutionary advantage for a bee to sting a mammal to defend itself as an individual; honey bees will generally only sting when the hive is directly threatened, and honey bees found in the field or on a flower will rarely sting. Note: Africanized honey bees can be more aggressive than the more common European honey bees, but still only defend the hive, and their sting is the same.
6. Also barns, attics
7. Has a brown protective layer when the nest is in an unsheltered position. Also barns, attics, hollow walls, abandoned bee hives

Resources: www.phillybeekeepers.org Philadelphia Beekeepers Guild Normally there is no fee to have a swarm collected; removals for a fee – get an estimate before engaging a sub-contractor.

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Based in Center City

Swarms in Center City, West Philly, near Temple campus

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Based in Queens Village

Swarms, Removals; Bees and Wasps

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