



Environmental Health & Safety

Tip of the Month

Cicada Killers are Gentle Giants

Cicada killers are large docile wasps that emerge in the summer to hunt for cicadas. The cicada killers look very dangerous, but are really gentle giants. The males buzz around to defend their territory from other males and can be seen charging windows when they see their reflection and think it's another male. The males have no stinger and can not sting or bite. Although they may appear aggressive and appear to chase you, they are just investigating every new visitor to their territory.



Adult Cicada



Getting a helping hand with her heavy load

The female cicada killers can be seen digging holes in loose sandy soil where she will lay her eggs. They prefer open patches in sunny areas with trees nearby. Last year cicada killers set up homes in the front of Suffolk Hall, the ESS steps and ESS. The female cicada killers capture cicada and drag them into their burrow. The picture to the right shows a cicada killer with a captured cicada. Female cicada killers can sting, but seldom do. Unless you step barefoot on a female or grab her with bare hands, you are extremely unlikely to be stung. If you are allergic to bee stings, get immediate medical assistance if you are stung.

Control of Cicada Killers

When requested, the EH&S Pest Management staff will dust the cicada killer burrows with pyrethrum pesticide. Contact with the dust will kill the adult, but it does not kill the eggs. Therefore, cicada killers will return the following year. The cicada killers are around for a month during the summer, but if you feel you can not coexist with this beneficial insect and must take action; here are a few suggestions for controlling the cicada killer population in your home.

- Cicada killers can not burrow in healthy turf and prefer well drained soils. Keep the lawn well watered in the areas where they burrow to discourage them and hope they select another site for their home.
- If they're burrowing in your planting beds, put down landscape fabric covered with mulch to discourage them. A layer of fine gravel will also discourage them from burrowing.
- Cicada killers are poor fliers and can be easily dispatched with the swing of a tennis racket or by stepping on them when they're near their burrow.
- Pouring boiling water down each burrow at night when the females have returned will kill the adult and the eggs.

For additional information on cicada killers check the following sites:

Wikipedia @ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cicada_killer_wasp

Critter Zone Magazine @

<http://www.critterzone.com/magazineresource/magazine-article-cicada-killer-wasp-Sphecus-speciosus.htm>



www.stonybrook.edu/ehs