

AG NOTES
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FARMERS MARKET

The late season crops are coming in and it looks better than the early crop. Tomatoes, green beans, okra, and melons are looking really good. The baked goods look really good, and the fried pies are delicious. The canned stuff looks good as well.

The market is on Thursday afternoons at 2:30 pm at the pavilion next to the big blue water tower at the Celebration Grounds.

HORNETS

I had to spray some wasps nests last week. Always a dangerous thing to do. But it worked. Then I had two requests to identify two very large insects, and they were both European hornets. Glad I didn't have to deal with these. These things are stingers, especially if they are provoked. There is another one, a cicada killer, that is very large as well, and they look very similar to the European hornet. They both are in our area.

There is another large hornet that is found in Washington State. Referred to as the murder hornet by the media, it is the northern giant hornet. It resembles the two above in size, but its markings are different.

Penn State University put out a good article last year on the differences, and I'll share this. It is important to know about these insects since a sting is painful and can cause a medical emergency for some folks. This article and photos can be found at <https://extension.psu.edu/european-hornet>

European hornets are native to Europe and Asia. They were introduced from central Europe into North America and first detected in the 1840s. European hornets have since become widespread and well established in the eastern United States. They have continued to spread westward and were first reported from Arkansas in 1999.

European hornet workers can be up to an inch long while queens are slightly larger and can reach 1.3 inches. They are amongst the largest wasps in the areas they occur. The head is red and yellow, the thorax is red and brown, while the abdomen is brown anteriorly and mostly yellow posteriorly with brown tear-drops. They live in paper nests built in trees and other structures.

European hornets are the species most commonly mistaken for the Asian or northern giant hornet found in northwestern North America. Northern giant hornets are, as the name suggests, native to temperate and tropical eastern Asia.

In September 2019, a nest of northern giant hornets was discovered and destroyed on Vancouver Island, British Columbia and in December the Washington State Department of Agriculture confirmed a dead specimen had been found in Washington. That was the first record of this species in the United States. At this time, northern giant hornets are not known to occur outside of Washington state and Vancouver Island. The two species can also be distinguished by a number of features including the color and position of the eyes.

Northern giant hornet queens are among the largest wasps in the world and can grow in excess of 2 inches with a wingspan of 3 inches. However, they are only seen outside the nest when they are hibernating or in the spring before workers have emerged. Also called Northern giant hornet, workers can grow to 1.5 inches in length and are similar in size to other large wasps. Asian giant hornets are strikingly colored, with yellow heads, a black thorax, and yellow and black or brown striped abdomens.

Northern giant hornets typically build their nests underground, usually in abandoned rodent burrows in forests, often in association with pine roots (Figures 3–5). Nests are sometimes constructed in dead, hollow trunks or roots of trees, but these are never more than 3 to 6 feet above the ground. Aerial nests are rare – of 1,756 nests examined in Japan, only three were constructed above ground. Because of their subterranean nesting habit, locating the nests of northern giant hornets can be very difficult. As stated above, this hornet is only found in Washington State and British Columbia in Canada.

Eastern cicada killers can be distinguished from European hornets based on coloration and behavior. The abdomens of cicada are mostly black with yellow markings while European hornet abdomens are mostly yellow with brown markings. European hornets construct paper nests in aerial locations, while cicada killers nest in the ground. Cicada killers are solitary, so only each female digs her own nest, but may nest communally, with many nests in a small area that has the right soil substrate.

Disposing of European hornets nests may be necessary and treated just like our common wasps nests. It's best to wait until dark, when all of the workers are back to the nest. Use the aerosols for wasps and hornets that are available. Any of these do a good job. They spray a long distance that helps to protect you and they tend to be foam products that cover the nest quickly. I recommend wearing a long-sleeve shirt with collar and cuffs fastened, as well as long pants and shoes. A headcover of some sort will also reduce the possibility of stings.

Too much clothing? Better than getting stung!