



## Mud Wasps



### This Little Troublemaker is a Friendly Wasp Flying Solo

If you hear a wasp buzzing loudly in your garden or find a wasp's nest under your eaves or attached to your house or shed, don't panic just yet. Mud Dauber Wasps might look a bit scary with their bright yellow and dark black colouring, but they are actually quite harmless if you leave them alone, and they are a great buddy to have around your backyard for many reasons.

During April, Mud Dauber Wasps are after a hard-earned break. Females have been busy with parenting duties of late, but now they are after a holiday. They'll soon be winging their way off to warmer places to hibernate over the winter.

What have these mothers been up to? This Female Mud Wasp has been ensuring the future of the next generation. To take care of her young, a Female Mud Dauber Wasp collects mud from the edge of a stream, dam or other water source. She then mixes it with saliva, and moulds it into a multi-tiered nest of many cells covered in extra layers of mud in a sheltered place. She emits a high pitched buzz while working the nest, which helps to distribute the mud evenly. She might choose to build her nest under a rock overhang, on a tree trunk, or on a building.

Once she's got the nest sorted, the mother Mud Dauber hunts out spiders in your backyard. She catches them, paralyzes them, and takes them back into the nest where she lays an egg on them. This is so that when the eggs hatch, even though she will be long gone, her young will have a fresh meal to feast on. Once done, she seals off the nest and heads off in search of warmer weather.

Mud Daubers are great to have around your garden as they will control your spider and bug numbers. You don't have to worry about stings, as they are not aggressive and will only sting if handled. So as long as you give them some space and let them go about their business, they won't bother you.

These attractive slender waisted wasps, with extra curvy bodies are good for your plants too. Adult Mud Dauber Wasps feed on nectar and pollen from flowers and native plants. In doing so, they are great pollinators. Plants rely on pollination to stay healthy, grow and reproduce, and in return they give us fresh air, shade, healthy soil, and food for people and animals. So Mud Dauber Wasps help your garden thrive!

Breeding season is the only time Mud Daubers spend around each other. Unlike other social wasps, bees and ants, Mud Daubers live largely solitary lives. If you spot one, relax in the knowledge that you most likely won't be meeting a swarm any time soon.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Only female Mud Dauber Wasps have stingers. The female's stinger is in the same body part as the ovipositor, which is the needle-like tube they use to lay their eggs.

Do a bit of research first, as you may just find out that your new backyard buddy is actually a harmless native who is very helpful in the garden - like the Mud Dauber Wasp. With that said, give wasps their space and you will both stay happy.

## Bodies in the Closet



Large solitary Mud Wasps are buzzing about collecting mud from garden ponds and building their bottle-shaped nest in sheltered spots around many backyards all over Australia.

Unlike social wasps, these large insects are harmless. They come in many colours and sizes but many are black or black and orange. The female alone builds its nest of mud or clay, which looks a little like a swallow's nest with a narrow neck. Some can have the delicate shape of an ancient roman amphora.

She will often attach it to a tree trunk or a building, wherever it finds shelter from the weather. Some species prefer hollows, just to be safe, and may choose a dry pipe or any hollow gardening tools left around. Occasionally, you might have a wasp building a whole series of nests in a row, and you may see her skills and technique improve from one to the next.

When she is satisfied with her building work, the wasp will catch an insect or spider. She will place her paralysed prey into the nest, lay a single egg and seal the entrance. Inside, the egg will hatch. The larvae will eat the food and pupate. When it emerges as an adult wasp, it will chew its way out of the cell.

Even if you don't have a nest in your backyard you can still see mud wasps visiting as they feed on nectar and drink water. You may also see a Spider Wasp dragging a spider much larger than itself back to its underground nest to feed its offspring.

Exopest can assist by knocking down mud nest after injecting first to kill any adult or larvae if you want this done (but remember in most instances these are native and harmless), contact our office for a quote or to arrange a treatment, should you wish to have professional help.