

Cicada Killer Wasp



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. The female cicada killers can be seen digging holes in loose well drained soil where she will lay her eggs. They prefer open patches in sunny areas with trees nearby. Females have significant stingers which they plunge into cicadas to inject venom that paralyzes them. Without doubt, their stings are painful. However, they are not aggressive and do not have nest-guarding instinct of honey bees and hornets. You can walk through areas where they are active without attracting attention. When male cicada killers emerge each July, they stay where they hatch (your yard) and fight each other and fly around looking for females; the females emerge in late July and early August, mate and then search for suitable places to dig their nesting burrows. These are behaviors which bother many people because the males appear aggressive when they fly close to them and the females are very persistent in searching a lawn for good nesting sites. They may dig along sidewalk or patio edges, in flower beds, gardens, or lawns. This can be unsightly in highly managed turf and the accumulations may smother grass. Large aggregations of cicada killers can build up over time. 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. Use a blower or broom to disperse dirt piles. Pouring boiling water down each burrow at night when the females have returned will kill the adult and the eggs.

