**Biology**

Carpenter ants are one of the largest species that you will find in North Carolina. Like other ant species, carpenter ants are social. This means they live in a colony and have several "castes" or adult forms that perform different jobs in the colony. The **queen** usually reaches **9/16 inch** in length. The **workers** range in size from **1/4 to 7/16 inch**. Even if you see different sized ants, they could all be from the same colony. All of these ants are considered adults no matter their size. Only the queen produces offspring in the nest. Immature ants (larvae) are white, legless, and maggot-looking in appearance. They remain in the nest and are fed by the workers. The larvae develop into pupae, which are tan and oval in shape. Eventually, new adults emerge from these pupae. The color of adult ants will vary upon the species. The black carpenter ant, the species that most commonly nests in homes, is primarily black in color. Other carpenter ant species may be more reddish-brown to yellow in color.

**Worker Carpenter Ant**

**Foraging Distances and Habitat**

Carpenter ants are different from termites in that they do not eat wood; carpenter ants tunnel through wood while building or expanding their nests. The common outdoor nesting sites include tree holes, tree stumps, logs, standing dead trees, and planter boxes. When conditions are agreeable, carpenter ants like to establish nests indoors. Common indoor nesting sites are structural wood, wall voids, attic areas, insulation (foam or fiberglass), hollow doors, window/door casings, voids beneath kitchen/bathroom cabinets, as well as hollow beams (decorative beams that may cover pipes or girders). In the case of carpenter ant species that nest in existing cavities, the workers may then invade and damage nearby structural wood while expanding their nest site. Carpenter ants prefer wood with a moisture content of 15% or higher, so the problem is often associated with moisture. The ants often invade homes through cracks and crevices in the foundation masonry, around windows and doors, through foundation, as well as heating/AC vents. They may travel along tree limbs or shrubs that touch the siding and roof, gaining access to attic areas. Telephone, electric and cable TV lines also provide ready means of entering the home.

**Food Preferences**

The primary food of carpenter ants is honeydew, the sugary secretions of certain plant-feeding insects, such as aphids and scales. For this reason, worker ants are often found traveling up tree trunks and on to limbs searching for honeydew on the leaves. The ants will also feed on plant secretions and fruit juices, as well on the remains of insects, including dead members of their own colony. When the ants invade homes, they often seek out sweet items, such as sugar, but they will also will feed on fats, grease, and meats. Water is also very important to the ants. Outdoors, you will often find ants collecting water dripping from water spigots, gutter downspouts, and air conditioner drain lines. On the inside of the home, carpenter ants are often seen near sinks, bathtubs, and dishwashers.

**How to Reduce Conducive Conditions**

The keys to successful control of carpenter ants are:

~ Elimination or repair of wet wood

~ Repair leaks from plumbing, drains and fixtures

~ Replace damp and damaged structural wood

~ Ventilate attics and crawl spaces

~ Check appliances such as dishwashers and ice makers to see if they need to be ventilated

~ Prune and Trim back trees and vegetation so that branches do not reach the structure

~ Vacuum, remove the vacuum bag and dispose of it properly to prevent any living ants from escaping.

~ Caulk gaps around screens and repair holes in screens (windows and doors)

~ Seal cracks and holes around wires, pipes and other wall and roof entrances to the structure and repair with paint, putty or caulk

**Proposed Treatment Options and Pricing**

**Upon the approach of treating for carpenter ants, your technician will**

1. Identify the Source to make sure carpenter ants is what is the cause of the issue at hand.
2. Identify the Conducive Condition looking for any wet or moisture areas that are conducive to any wood around the location of the source. Technician may advise the importance of replacing any damaged wood to help reduce the activity at hand.
3. Customize a treatment plan to help decrease the amount of activity in and around the structure.
4. Carry out the plan and set let you know if a follow up appointment is needed.

This is NOT a one-time treatment and your problems will NOT be resolved immediately. It WILL take additional treatments depending upon the conducive conditions around the structure and the amount of activity in the area(s) being treated. Patience and time is the key to the process of reducing carpenter ants. With these combinations and methods listed previously together we can get to the root of the issue at hand and help your environment be safe and healthy.