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## *Stinging Wasps: Hunting wasps*

*Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for successful plant problem management.*

### ***Biology***

Hunting wasps are solitary and rarely sting. There are many species ranging in size from ½ to 1 ½ inches belonging to a number of families and each specializes in the kind of insect it hunts and preys on. Some prey only on spiders, others on grasshoppers, others on caterpillars. Prey is taken back to the usually mud nest and stored within it. An egg is laid on the paralyzed prey which provides food for the developing larva. Hunting wasps may be large and appear quite fearsome but they are a definite asset to pest control in the home garden.

### **Prey or Pest Targeted**

~ Spiders, grasshoppers, caterpillars, beetles, flies, mantids, bees, wasps

### **Attracting and Keeping Beneficial Insects in Your Yard**

- ~ Avoid regular use of synthetic, broad-spectrum pesticides. Infrequent use of certain narrow-spectrum pesticides is more compatible with some beneficials but generally the less chemical inputs there are, the greater and more diverse the beneficial insect community will be. Extensive lawns are also not conducive to attracting and retaining a diversity of beneficial insects, mites and spiders. Minimize lawn areas and maximize shrub and bush plantings. Many beneficials reside naturally in riparian and other 'natural' areas near to many back yards. Natural dispersion from these refuges ensures that some beneficials will visit back yards but they will not stay unless food, host and shelter resources are available. Native plants have closer affinities with native insects and therefore provide most of these resources. A garden with a good diversity of local native flora in and around back yards, will improve the abundance and diversity of local, beneficial arthropods. Native flora also provides natural overwintering sites for many beneficial insects and it is useful to leave at least a small area of native vegetation undisturbed during fall and winter.
- ~ Some kinds of beneficial insects (e.g. lady beetles, lacewings, predatory mites) are available for purchase from commercial suppliers. However, benefits from introducing these beneficials are usually limited and short-lived. Upon release, commercially obtained lady beetles and lacewings often disperse and may rapidly leave your backyard despite the presence of prey and suitable nectar resources. Generally, it is more effective and sustainable to create a garden habitat that will be colonized by beneficials naturally.

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*Images*



~ Caption: *Hunting wasp (Sphecidae) carrying caterpillar prey*  
~ Photo by: *D.G. James*