

Mexican honey wasps

The Mexican honey wasp, *Brachygastra mellifica*, is a neotropical wasp that can be found in North and South America. Within North America, it can be found in Arizona and Texas.

Honey wasps are small, about 1/4 – 1/3 of an inch. These social wasps have teardrop-shaped abdomens striped in yellow and black, rusty wings, and a dark head and thorax. Like other wasps, female honey wasps are capable of stinging and will do so to protect the colony or if they are provoked.



Mexican honey wasps create a small, about 18 inches in size, basketball to football shaped nest out of a paper-like material. These nests are typically located in trees or shrubs, often higher up where they won't be disturbed. Nests can be home to 3,000- 18,000 wasps. Unlike honey bees, Mexican honey wasps can have multiple queens in each colony. Clusters of colonies can be common in some areas and nests last about 3 years before they are abandoned.

These wasps are pollinators and collect nectar and pollen to feed larvae in the colony. Adult wasps feed on fluids and, sometimes, exoskeletons of other insects, especially Asian citrus psyllids when they are available. These wasps create and store honey like honey bees to survive through the winter.

If you need to manage these wasps, then you should contact a professional that has proper protective equipment, such as a bee suit.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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