

Asian giant hornets

What headline can draw people away from their thoughts dwelling on the current state of the world and Coronavirus? That would be MURDER HORNETS! I cannot think of a more sensationalized headline, so kudos to whomever came up with that attention grabber. This headline is popping up everywhere from social media outlets, television, newspapers, and others. Quite frankly, it makes me cringe each time I see it. Asian giant hornets (AGH) are *Vespa mandarinia* NOT "murder" hornets. If you want to use a common name instead of the scientific name, then call them by the CORRECT common name of Asian giant hornet.

Asian giant hornets are large, around 2 inches in length, with an orangish head, brown antennae (the base of the antennae are yellow-orange), brown to black eyes and ocelli (simple eyes located between the compound eyes). The thorax is dark brown with greyish wings and the abdomen has alternating bands of brownish-black and yellow-orange.

Asian giant hornets are capable of inflicting a painful sting. Please note that while the sting can lead to death in some cases, it is not what typically happens. People are also capable of receiving painful stings from insects already here in Texas such as honey bees, paper wasps, yellowjackets, or even fire ants and some can die from being stung. Death by insect sting usually depends upon the number of stings and how your body chemistry reacts to the venom injected by the insect. Asian giant hornets are capable of killing other insects, including pollinators, but they are not doing this to be vicious or killing for sport. The hornets use insects they kill as food for their larvae....just like other wasps that we have here in Texas.

We do not currently have Asian giant hornets in Texas. If you think you have these wasps, then please send samples or images to me for identification as we are identifying any items of concern for our clientele.

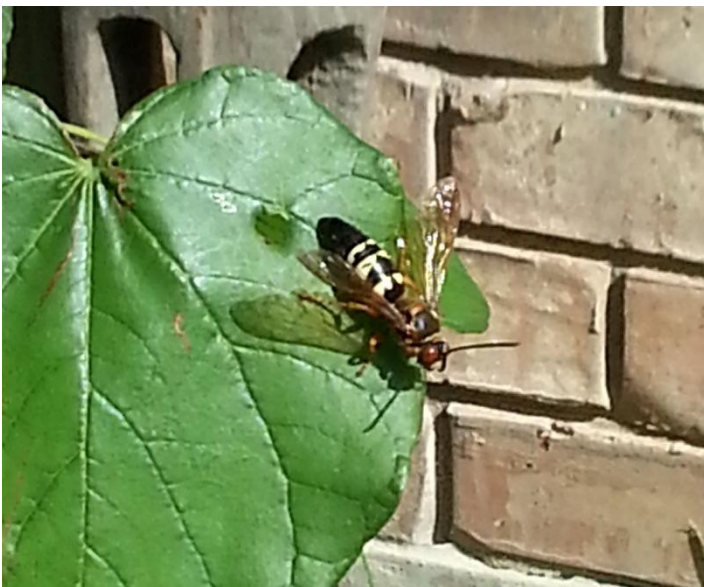
Some insects that may be confused with AGH to the untrained eye:

Paper wasps are reddish brown in color & sometimes have yellow markings on their bodies and are ½-1 inches in length. Paper wasps make a paper-like nest out of chewed wood fiber that has open cells and hangs from a single stalk.



Yellowjackets are yellow & black in color and are $\frac{1}{2}$ in length. Bald-faced hornets are a type of yellowjacket. These wasps also make a paper-like nest, but it is enclosed with a single opening.

Cicada killer wasps have a reddish head and thorax with an abdomen that alternates with yellow and black markings. These wasps reach $1 \frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. Cicada killers burrow into the ground, so you may see holes left behind from their digging.



FACTS about Asian giant hornets in North America

1. A colony was found late last year (September 2019) in Nanaimo, British Columbia on Vancouver Island. The colony was located and destroyed.
2. A sighting and dead specimen was found in Washington state in December 2019 in Blaine, WA. This was the first reported sighting of the Asian giant hornet in the U.S.
3. It is currently unknown how the hornets entered the U.S. and genetic testing leads to the conclusion that the hornets found in BC & WA are two separate introductions.
4. Agencies are currently monitoring & trapping with lures to discover any queens or workers. They are talking about attaching radio tracking devices to captured wasps to track them back to their nest.

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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