

# Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) nest identification

Asian hornets and other wasps produce two types of nests; embryo/primary nests and secondary nests. All wasp and hornet nests look similar. To identify a nest, it is important to watch for, and identify, visiting insects from a safe distance.



## Asian hornet embryo/primary nests:

- Embryo nests are small, 5-10cm in diameter, spherical, and have a small entrance hole at the bottom.
- Built in spring by an Asian hornet queen and usually found in a protected place such as brambles, a hedgerow, or in/on a building.
- Workers from this nest expand it into an irregular structure termed a primary nest (grapefruit sized, up to 15cm) with the embryo nest at the centre.
- **Only report embryo/primary nests if seen with Asian hornets.**

## Asian hornet secondary nests:

- Pear-shaped, entrance hole halfway up the nest, up to 60cm wide x 80cm tall.
- Usually found in trees but may also be in/on buildings and hedges.
- Use binoculars to identify secondary nests from a safe distance.
- **Do not disturb suspected nests and retreat from any wasp/hornet nests if flying insects are observed.**

**Secondary nests** in a tree canopy in summer (left) and winter (right).



**Embryo & primary nests.** At this stage, all wasp and hornet nests look similar. Only report if seen with Asian hornets. Embryo nest (left), primary nest (right).



**Secondary nest in a hedge.**



**Secondary nest in a building.**



Please report Asian hornet sightings immediately with a photo

Use our online recording form:

<https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/invasives>

For more information visit [www.invasives.ie](http://www.invasives.ie) or email

[invasives@biodiversityireland.ie](mailto:invasives@biodiversityireland.ie)

Report an Asian hornet or  
an Asian hornet nest:



# Nests and objects that look similar

Secondary Asian hornet nests can resemble wasp nests or other objects in trees. If you suspect one, check safely with binoculars before reporting. **The best way to be sure of the identification of a nest is to have a photograph of the insect that is using the nest.**

## Other objects in trees

- Crow and magpie nests.
- Witch's broom/birch besom (galls).
- Squirrel dreys.

Bird's nest (left), witch's broom (right).



## Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*)

Secondary nests:

- Usually found in trees, may also be in/on buildings and hedges.
- Pear-shaped.
- Entrance hole halfway up the nest.
- Up to 60cm wide x 80cm tall.
- Tree nests can be at heights of up to 40 meters.



**Genus *Vespula*** e.g. common wasp, German wasp, red wasp:

Secondary nests:

- Usually underground.
- Common wasp nests often found in roof spaces.
- Enclosed spaces are preferred.
- Typically much smaller than Asian hornet secondary nests.

German wasp nest (left), Common wasp nest (right).



## Genus *Dolichovespula*

e.g. tree wasp, Norwegian wasp:

Secondary nests:

- Can be found both in enclosed spaces and hanging in shrubs and trees.
- Typical nest heights are lower than Asian hornet nests.
- Entrances are at the bottom of the nest.
- Outside layer patterns are not swirly and scalloped like Asian hornet nests; layers have straighter edges.

*Dolichovespula* wasp nests.



**European hornet (*Vespa crabro*)** occurs in Britain but not in Ireland or Northern Ireland. Unlike Asian hornets, secondary nests are usually in hollow trees or chimneys, not in open air. Nests are cylindrical with a wide bottom opening and smaller (30×60cm).



Developed  
with the  
support of:



NPWS



Northern Ireland  
Environment  
Agency



Shared Island  
Initiative

mus  
eum



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council