

*Vespa velutina*

# Asian Hornet

## NEST IDENTIFICATION



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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.**

**Please report Asian hornet sightings immediately with a photo**

Use our online recording form:

<https://invasives.ie/asianhornetreporter>

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

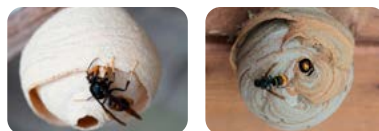
#### Secondary nests

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.



Scan to report an  
Asian hornet or an  
Asian hornet nest.

# Nests and objects that look similar



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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.**



## 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.



## Other objects in trees

- Crow and magpie nests.
- Witch's broom/birch besom (galls).
- Squirrel dreys.
- Bird's nest (left), witch's broom (right).



## Genus *Vespula*

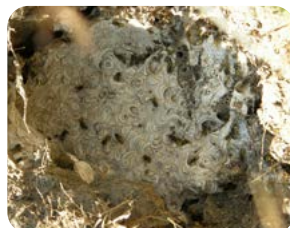
e.g., common wasp, German wasp, red wasp.

### Secondary nests:

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



German wasp nest



Common wasp nest

## 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 on the island of 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 (30x60cm).

## Who is also involved



Image credits. Tree image adapted from: Trees in a hedgerow by Marathon, CC BY-SA 2.0. Witch's broom: The British Plant Gall Society. Asian hornet embryo and secondary nest images: John de Carteret. Primary nest image: Laurino et al. (2020) *Vespa velutina*: An Alien Driver of Honey Bee Colony Losses. Diversity, 12, 5. Norwegian wasp image: Miroslav Deml. Common wasp nest: Steven Falk. Dolichovespula nests: Charlotte Salter-Townshend (Bottom), Maurice Browne (top). German wasp nest: ©JuTa/via Wikipedia - CC BY-SA 3.0.

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