

Western Yellowjacket



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Typical Location When Observed: Outdoors visiting dining areas, garbage, and sweets (e.g., aphid honeydew). Nests in hollows of walls, belowground burrows. Occasionally found in homes, particularly in fall..

Importance/Damage: The most common stinging insect in Colorado. A serious nuisance pest.

Geographic Location: Residential and open wooded areas, excepting the eastern Plains.

Distinguishing Features: The western yellowjacket is brightly marked with yellow and black and is not heavily covered with hairs, as are bees. Workers, most commonly seen during late summer, are about 10-13 mm. The overwintering queens, sometimes seen in homes in fall and again in early spring, are considerably larger (15-17 mm).

The western yellowjacket and the prairie yellowjacket (*Vespula atropilosa*) are the two species commonly captured in “wasp traps”.

Look-Alikes: Several other yellowjackets occur Colorado, but these do not scavenge and rarely are a source of stings. In yards, the European paper wasp may be a very common yellow and black species of very similar appearance. These can be separated by details in Extension Fact Sheet 5.611, *European Paper Wasp*.

Resources: Yellowjackets and their management are discussed in Extension Fact Sheet 5.525, *Nuisance Wasps and Bees*.



Western yellowjackets scavenging

Scientific Name: *Vespula pensylvanica*

Order: Hymenoptera (Bees, Wasps, Ants, Sawflies and Relatives)

Family: Vespidae (Vespid/Paper Wasps)

Actual Length

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