

Yellow Jackets

Why we care

Yellow jackets seem to love summer food as much as we do. While they can be a nuisance, they are also valuable scavengers and predators of other pests. Understanding a bit about yellow jacket behavior and natural ways to keep them at bay will make for better picnics and a healthier environment.

Simple, positive steps

Avoid stings.

- Keep your distance. Nests are frequently located underground, under shrubs, or in rock or leaf piles. Consider letting them be; yellow jackets do not use the same nest for more than one season.
- Don't smash them. Squashing releases a chemical alarm that signals other yellow jackets to attack.
- Move slowly. They will not sting unless disturbed. If you can't sit still, slowly brush one off with a piece of paper.
- Avoid wearing scented perfumes, hair spray, lotions, deodorant, and brightly colored clothing.
- Feed pets indoors and keep garbage cans clean and tightly covered.
- If you are stung, apply ice in a damp cloth.

Trapping & removal.

- A [Safer brand](#) trap allows you to bait and catch yellow jackets and then release them when you go inside. A [Rescue trap](#) will kill the insects but is reusable. Or you can [make your own trap](#).
- Removing a nest should be tackled only by [professionals](#), some of whom might be able to use vacuuming instead of sprays or dusts. If they use chemicals, ask that they use pyrethrins.
- For more information, visit the website [Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides](#).

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@ecoschoolnetwork.org.