

Carpenter bees, hemp webinar, and Young Grower Award



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# PestTalks

## COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Buzzing carpenter bees  
National hemp webinar  
Response to pesticide bill  
Young Grower/Retailer Awards



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## Carpenter bee survey

Elsa Youngsteadt at North Carolina State University is helping me with identifying native bees I'd collected in a pollinator conservation project. Elsa is experienced in working with native bees and understanding the impact of climate change on urban ecology.

In 2019, Elsa and her graduate student Hannah Levenson published a wonderful handbook, *The Bees of North Carolina: An Identification Guide*, which is a great free resource for anyone interested in knowing what kind of bees visit their gardens.

Elsa has asked me to solicit participants in an online survey organized by her graduate student Kate Gorman. This survey aims to understand the perception of carpenter bee presence and management in urban communities. Won't you consider completing the 10-minute survey, even if you've never had to deal with carpenter bees?

Here's an introduction from Kate:

*My name is Kate Gorman and I am a graduate student working with Dr. Elsa Youngsteadt from the North Carolina State University Department of Applied Ecology. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study about eastern carpenter bee management on the property where you live. This survey is open to any adult living on private property in the United States. Even if you have never had carpenter bees on your property, your responses are still valuable.*

*If you decide to participate in this study, you will complete a 10- to 15-minute survey about the presence of eastern carpenter bees on the property where you live, any management techniques you already use and which management methods you would prefer given multiple variables. Your participation in this survey will allow researchers and managers to develop safer, more cost-effective carpenter bee management options in the future.*

*Remember, this survey is completely voluntary. If you'd like to participate, simply click the link below. If you have any questions about the study, please email or contact me*

at [carpenterbees@ncsu.edu](mailto:carpenterbees@ncsu.edu).

Click [HERE](#) to participate in the survey.



## What good is a carpenter bee?

This isn't the first time folks have asked me this question. In fact, you can replace "carpenter bee" with just about any insect, mite or critter you can think of. I could only reply "I don't know" most of the times I was asked this question.

Folks who think of carpenter bees as a pest usually suffered from the annoying habit of carpenter bees excavating nests in wooden structures on or around their homes. Sometimes, the nests attract woodpeckers, which can do even more damage. Unpainted, weathered soft woods—such as cypress and pine—are most preferred by the carpenter bees.

You have no idea how many fenceposts I've replaced around the horse pasture because of the combined damage from carpenter bees and woodpeckers (and the horse using them as scratch posts). I've given up in the past couple of years, choosing to just wait until I have to change out a whole section of fence instead of one post at a time.



I don't think I have enough wood putty for this one.

The two most common carpenter bee species in North America are the eastern carpenter bee, *Xylocopa virginica*, and the western carpenter bee, *Xylocopa varipuncta*. Y'all can probably guess the distribution of the two species based on their common names.

Carpenter bees are solitary bees, meaning that each nest contains babies from only one female and there's no queen or social structure. Most solitary bees build their nests in the ground, like the miner bees that are starting to show up in my yard. The ancestors of carpenter bees, however, evolved to chew tunnels, making nests in hard plant materials, such as dead wood or bamboo. The genus name, *Xylocopa*, means "wood-cutter." It's not difficult to imagine the carpenter bees changing from using dead tree trunks for nests to using dead wood used to build our homes.

As annoying as they are, there isn't much I can do about it. My youngest loved to swat them with a tennis racket (he's since grown into a teenager who thinks doing so isn't cool anymore). Painting the bare wood surfaces is a sure way to deter attacks, but my wife doesn't find painting fence posts the color of the rainbow (with surplus paints I got for cheap from local hardware stores) particularly appealing. I didn't think about painting the wood with almond oil in the spring and set up some kind of "trap fence" (i.e. untreated lumber you allow the carpenter bee to attack to lure the females away from the structures you want to protect) until I read [THIS ARTICLE](#) from Kate Anton and Christina Grozinger of Pennsylvania State Extension.

If the carpenter bees are attacking your house, you don't need my permission to go after them. Damaging the fences and sheds that I can replace is one thing; damaging my windows, doors and eaves is another thing. At this time, I don't care if the carpenter bees actually serve an important ecological function as a pollinator and decomposer. I can plug the holes, but I still need



to kill the bees before plugging the holes. Treating the entire outer surface may be necessary if the bees seem indiscriminate. Unless you have a structural pesticide applicator license like me, you shouldn't do it yourself, but consider hiring an exterminator or professional applicator to make the insecticide application.



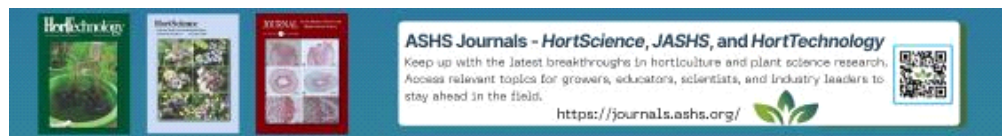
## National hemp webinar series is in session

Cornell University is partnering with USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the research arm of USDA, to offer a free webinar series on hemp production from January 26 (I didn't receive the announcement early enough to put the news in the last newsletter) to May 4. The webinar series provides a training opportunity for folks involved in or interested in hemp production.

The webinars are offered every other Wednesday from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Eastern. Topics to be covered include

- "Outdoor Cultivation" by Jeff Kostuik, Director of Hemp Genetics International, from January 26
- "Indoor Cultivation" by Bruce Bugbee of Utah State University on February 9
- "Hemp Processing Systems" by Heather Grab of Cornell University on February 23
- "Extraction Chemistry and Facility Design" by Alisia Ratliff, CEO of Victus Capital Ventures, on March 9
- "The Endocannabinoid System" by Ethan Russo, M.D., founder and CEO of CReDO Science, on March 23
- "Hemp Food Science" by Hunter Friedland, founder and CEO of Cirona Labs, on April 6
- "Hemp Diversity and Genetics" by Daniela Vergara, founder of Agricultural Genomics Foundation, on April 20
- "Economics of Hemp Production" by Tyler Mark of University of Kentucky on May 4

Click [HERE](#) to register for the webinars.



## Industry response to S. 3283

What is S. 3283, you ask? That's the Senate bill, dubbed the Protect America's Children from Toxic Pesticides Act, introduced by Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) in late 2021. The bill aims to ban uses of organophosphates, neonicotinoids and paraquat. (See my [newsletter](#) from November 2021 for a recap. If you're well versed in legalese, you can read S. 3283 in its entirety [HERE](#).)

More than 350 industry groups have co-signed a letter to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives and voiced their opposition to S. 3283. The groups support the pesticide registration and scientific review system that's already been employed by EPA under the Federal Insecticides, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, and believe the bill is undermining decades of established process and progress.

Click [HERE](#) to read the letter to the U.S. Congress.

## Nominate a deserving young grower or retailer!

If you know an excellent young professional among our midst, give them a chance to shine and be acknowledged for their dedication and hard work! (Unfortunately, you can't nominate me because the nominees must be under the age of 35. I may be eligible for the "slightly-older" awards. Thanks, though.)

Seriously, if you know a horticulturist (for the grower award) or a garden center professional (for the retailer award) that has gone above and beyond the call of duty and has become a standout among their peers, please consider nominating them for the [2022 GrowerTalks Young Grower Award](#) and the [2022 GreenProfit/The Garden Center Group Young Retailer Award](#), both also sponsored by AmericanHort. The nomination can be submitted by clicking on the award names above. Deadline for nomination is March 1.

Each of the three finalists for each award will be asked to write a guest editorial for the June issue of *GrowerTalks* or *Green Profit*. The finalists will also get a free trip to Cultivate'22 in Columbus, Ohio, and attend a special dinner with industry honchos. The winners of each award will be announced at the Unplugged event during Cultivate'22 and featured in the September issue of *GrowerTalks* or *Green Profit*.

See ya'll later!



JC Chong

Professor of Entomology at Clemson University

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