

CLOSE TO HOME

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Did You Know?

- What was swarming in your kitchen?
- Termites use garage doors?
- The best basement water solution?
- Why your hot water pressure was low?

Read the stories to find out more!

A Taste For Wood

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- Termites
- Carpenter Ants

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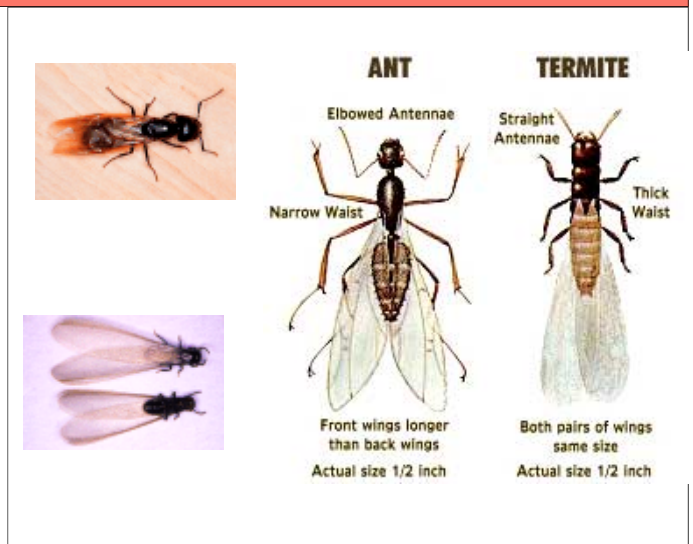
THE SWARM!

It sounds like an old movie or a scary dream. But if we look at the pictures, it may describe what is happening in our own homes! **April and May** are the months when winged carpenter ants and termites emerge from their nests in large swarms.

Termites will usually swarm in Monroe County in late March or April, depending on the weather. They usually emerge on warm, humid days when the sun is bright. There may only be a couple of days of termite swarm, or it may extend for three weeks. Cold snaps will cut the swarm short.

Carpenter ants have a more protracted swarm. They emerge from nests in trees, window frames, and wall voids during those unusually warm days when it first hits eighty degrees. Several swarms can occur throughout April and May when the weather is right.

Swarming ants and termites are often misidentified. Winged carpenter ants are



Pictured Top left: Carpenter Ant Swarmer
Bottom Left: Termite Swarmer

very common in our area, whereas winged termites are unusual. However, they are very distinct. The two drawings show the segmented body of the ant, and the straight antenna of the termite. **These distinctions are key in identification.** Also note the photos and the difference in wing length. Ter-

mite wings are at least twice the length of their bodies. Ant wings are much shorter.

Still unsure of what you saw? Save a sample in a pill bottle and we will be happy to take a look for you. Also, check our website [termite map](#). Winged insects in the "red" zones may be trouble!

SUBTERRANEAN SECRETS: TERMITE TIPS

How do termites get into homes? This column explores their most common entry points and explains why.

The common thread in termite entry is proximity of wood to soil. This month we look at overhead garage

doors.

These doors are framed by 2x4's on the sides, and a header above. The 2x4 side posts are usually buried in the concrete slab. This gives termites an easy access. They usually travel between

the 2x4 posts, hidden from view, on their way to the house.

Probing these areas with a screwdriver may be the only way to know if termites are there, especially in the early stages of infestation.

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YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED HERE!

Q. I have a sump pump that runs continually in the spring and after heavy rains. We have had basement floods in power outages. Is there anything I can do to stop flooding?

A. The very best option is to have a gravity fed drain system that sends basement water to the street storm sewer. No pumps are needed so you are not at the mercy of available electricity. The only potential problem with this system is a flooded storm sewer that can send water into your basement! Have a check valve installed to prevent this.

Where the gravity fed drain is not an option, you should utilize one of two backup methods. Battery backups for sump pumps are helpful, though they only last a few hours once electricity is

out. This is fine for a short disruption, but an ice storm lasting several days will likely deplete your battery in the first day.

A better option is a backup that is tied directly into the municipal water line. It uses water pressure to create a siphon that moves water out of the basement. The biggest downfall of this system is the added risk of leaving the water main on during extended absences. You may not have water in the basement, but if a pipe bursts upstairs, the rest of the house suffers!

The moral to the story: Keep some boots and a generator on hand.



ASK JOHN!

Q. The water pressure in our house plumbing seems low. What can be causing this and what are the remedies?

A. The age of the house will help determine the answer to this question. Newer homes will have copper plumbing, and often have a pressure reducer installed in the main line. In this situation, low pres-

sure may be remedied with an adjustment on the reducer. Another possibility is a kink in a supply line. This is often the case when the problem is only noticed in one bathroom.

In older homes, it can be more complex and costly to repair. Houses built prior to 1950 utilized galvanized plumbing for both supply and drains. Over time these clog with corrosion, restricting flow. Hot water lines are first to clog, with main lines from the street a close second. These pipes are also more prone to fractures when stresses are applied.

If your home has galvanized plumbing, you need to budget for replacing to copper. Your home inspection should note what kind of plumbing you have.