

Yellow jackets, hornets and wasps, oh my!

By Larry Hyslop



A hornet trap containing fermented fruit juice

Last summer, we placed a small pond in our back yard. We added sedge, cattails and two other water plants from local wetlands. Small, cheap, goldfish are growing large, living off algae and fish food. The sound of water falling into the pond is peaceful and the available water is a welcome resource to birds and our dogs.

Unfortunately, the water is also a boon to yellow jackets, hornets and wasps. An Internet search shows that most of our visitors are yellow jackets, although some are wasps, so I will use collectively the term yellow jackets. During any summer afternoon, 10-40 yellow jackets may be flying around the pond, where they land on vegetation to drink. The water is their primary goal and they soon fly off but a steady stream arrives all day, every day. It is difficult to enjoy the pond with stinging insects flying about our heads.

A search of the Internet for solutions produced the idea to find and destroy their hives. The problem is I found no hives on my property; these hornets all come from my neighbors' yards.

Last summer, I bought two commercial hornet traps, which only removed a few yellow jackets. Worse, this summer I paid \$5.00 for a new attractant pad that has so far killed one yellow jacket. My frustration led me to drag out a shop vac to vacuum them off the pond surface. In ten minutes, I sucked in 30 insects and some pond water. But the strong suction also pulled leaves off plants and I could not imagine crouching over the pond with my shop vac every day.

Then my brother gave me a solution, my brother! Who knew? The useless commercial traps have top compartments to hold liquid. Into these I poured a small amount of fruit juice and hung them near the pond. For a while, nothing happened since the juice must begin to ferment. This liquid began collecting flies and a few yellow jackets and then the heady mixture of fermented juice and dead insects "came alive" and attracted more and more flies and yellow jackets.

I may have to cover the sides of the plastic traps since the advanced mixture is not a pretty sight. Although it looks good to me, it is not an image I can put in the newspaper. I have already dumped one trap, added more juice and am waiting for its magic brew to begin working.

Is this the solution to removing yellow jackets from our back yard? I hope so, and it is a lot cheaper and more productive than commercial attractants. But is it the best solution? If you have any other ideas to help me eliminate yellow jackets, email me at hyslop.nv@gmail.com.

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