

# BUG OFF!

Creepy crawlers cheat sheet: Insect visitors abound due to mild weather

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24 HOURS

Despite a handful of chilly days in February, it's been a balmy winter so far. But we're not the only ones celebrating the spring-like temperatures — some creepy crawlers are joining the party, too.

"Carpenter ants are starting to present themselves now," says Paolo Bossio, president of Toronto-based Advantage Pest Control. "Our phones are going off the hook because we've had unseasonably high temperatures in February. The ants are a little confused, because



Paolo Bossio

they think it's spring, and we're getting what's known as 'swarming' right now."

Bossio, who's been battling insects and rodents for 15 years, says that carpenter ant-related calls are up 40% over cases reported last February.

"This feels like April to us," he says. "And when we tell customers that those little black ants are carpenter ants, they freak out, because they realize how damaging they are. They're wood-

destroying organisms, and while they're not as bad as termites, over time they can cause major structural damage."

Are you afraid that you might have some unwelcome insect visitors in your home? Here are four things Bossio says to keep in mind:

## 1 WATCH FOR INDOOR ANTS

"When you see ants inside your house, and it's still somewhat freezing outside overnight, it means it's indicative of a social ant colony inside your house. Ants in February and ants in January usually mean they're living inside your house. The first thing customers call us with is, 'Oh, I've got some ants coming in.' Well, they're not coming in from outside. If they're inside your house, that means there's already a colony inside your house."



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Paolo Bossio, president of Toronto-based Advantage Pest Control

## 2 PAY ATTENTION TO THE AREA OUTSIDE YOUR HOME

"Don't store wood adjacent to your house. Cut tree limbs away from the house. A lot of times they will use tree limbs or even electrical wires from city posts going toward your house. Don't cut the wires, but cut the tree limbs."

## 3 BE CAREFUL OF STUCCO

"A lot of people are building houses out of stucco. And some of the biggest carpenter ant colonies I've seen are in stucco homes, because the ants think the stucco is wood. So they move into the stucco and they have a whole wall that they think is soft wood, but it's actually Styrofoam."

## 4 BRING IN THE PROS

"When you have carpenter ants, we usually recommend a professional service. We do have products in our store for people who can't afford that. But because carpenter ants can cause structural damage, we usually recommend professional service."

**"No other insect that we treat has people calling me at all hours of the night, bawling their eyes out."**

Paolo Bossio on the emotional damage caused by bedbugs



# 'FUN' BEDBUG FACTS

During our conversation about pests, Paolo Bossio also told us some facts about bedbugs:

## BEDBUGS GIVE HIM A LOT OF BUSINESS

"In my first year, in 2001 or 2002, we did one or two bedbug jobs. And now it represents about 40-50% of our business."

## LIKE AN APPLE SEED

"Bedbugs are definitely visible. An adult engorged bedbug is the same size as an apple seed."

## YOU CAN'T JUST SPRAY

"A lot of companies are still using spray-only approach. Our company

provides a more integrated strategy, involving heat, steam, insecticides, passive monitors and early detection systems."

## LANDLORDS DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU ABOUT BEDBUGS

"But they are obligated to cover the cost of bedbugs. The challenge is, when a landlord calls us they're looking for the cheapest price possible."

## MATTRESS ENCASEMENTS WORK

"That's one of the first tools that we recommend to a customer, because it seals in the bedbugs, and it seals out the bedbugs. Even if you

don't have bedbugs, I recommend getting one, just in case."

## THERE'S A BIG EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

"No other insect that we treat has people calling me at all hours of the night, bawling their eyes out. I've become somewhat of a psychiatrist, helping people with their emotional issues. Some people even develop delusional parasitosis. They're so afraid of bedbugs after having a bout with them that even after they're gone, they think they're still around. They're constantly itching themselves and calling us, suspecting the issue is still there." — SEAN FITZGERALD