



The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

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*Putting Science to Work for Society
Protecting Agriculture, Public Health, and the Environment*

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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Native Cicada Killer vs. Giant Asian Murder Hornet

New Haven - Currently we are experiencing higher than normal activity in Connecticut of our large native solitary wasp called the “Cicada Killer”, *Sphecius speciosus*. It is being confused with the giant Asian hornet- ”murder hornet” *Vespa mandarinia* which has received a great deal of media attention. The Cicada Killer wasp is a solitary gentle giant and can be seen all over New England, while the giant Asian hornet is native to east Asia. It has been intercepted in Washington State where the Washington State Department of Agriculture is addressing the problem. The giant Asian hornet is not here in Connecticut.

In late July into August, Cicada Killer hunting wasps time their appearance to the emergence of cicadas. Males, who have no stingers emerge first, establish territory and joust one another. When the females emerge, males compete for access to the females. Each female then seeks a sandy dry patch of ground, digs a tunnel, flies up to a tree, paralyzes a cicada, takes it down to her tunnel, and literally stuffs it into the tunnel. She then lays an egg on the cicada which becomes food for her offspring. Sometimes, several wasps may select the same desirable location for their tunnels, but each has her own tunnel.

Cicada killer-wasps are not aggressive. They will fly up and move out of the way if a person approaches. It is not necessary to kill these wasp, but to understand that the soil they are digging in is dry and sandy. They are an indicator that the soil/ ground area where they are working is in poor condition. Correct the poor soil conditions and next year the wasps will find a new location to dig.

<https://portal.ct.gov/CAES/Publications/Publications/Pest-Alerts>

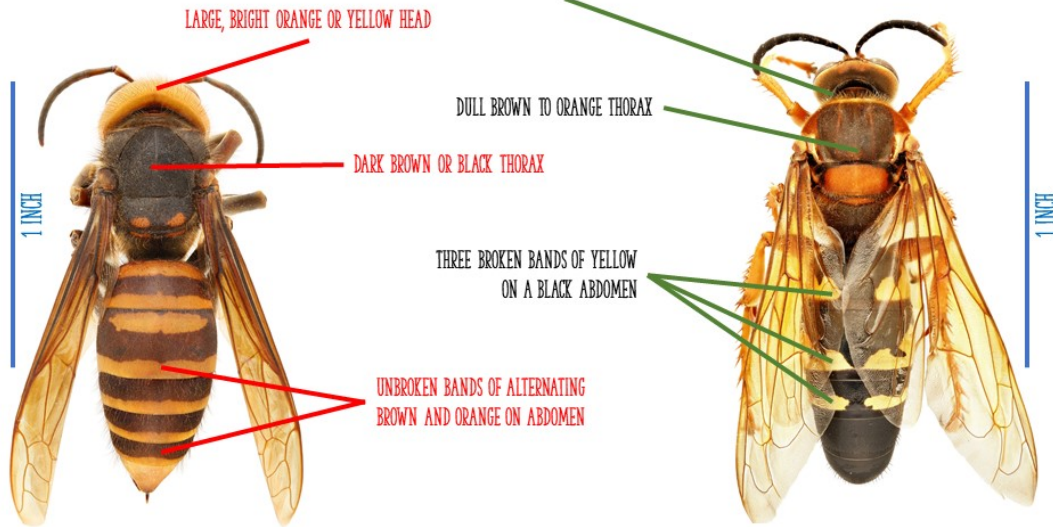
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GIANT HORNET VS. CICADA KILLER

VESPA MANDARINIA

DULL BROWN HEAD, SMALL YELLOW PATCH ON FACE

SPECTIUS SPECTIOSUS



Giant hornets were intercepted on the U.S. west coast in Washington State in late 2019 and are not found in Connecticut. Cicada killers are a common large native solitary digging wasp that is active July through August in Connecticut.

Image Credits: Hanna Royals, Museum Collections: Hymenoptera, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org



Graphic by Katherine Dugas CAES

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