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Carpenter Ants: Tiny. But Their Destruction is Mighty

Carpenter ants are on the rise in the northeast. That's trouble. Less than an inch in size, these insects work quickly to burrow through the wood in your home, and cause major damage. A little known fact: they work faster than termites. In fact, carpenter ants can take out a backyard deck in ONE season.

Tree branches. Siding corners. Cable lines. These are all ready-made pathways for entry. Once inside, carpenter ants set up satellite nests, drilling directly into moisture filled or damaged wood to create holes or galleries.

Our moist climate makes homes in New Jersey and the entire northeast vulnerable to infestation. Behind bathroom tiles; under tub voids, sinks, showers, dishwashers and roofs; in attic beams; under sub floor insulation; hollow spaces in doors, curtain rods and walls. These are areas in which carpenter ants settle.

Routine professional inspection and maintenance help to avoid problems. Eliminating moisture trouble spots—damp wood, leaky faucets and pipes, and gutters with leaf and debris buildup—are also good deterrents.

Fortunately, Mother Nature has established natural defenses. Botanical oils from plants and trees—thyme, rosemary and wintergreen—can be used to treat infestations without toxic side effects. Orthoboric acid, natively found in plants and seawater, also creates a nontoxic foundation spray barrier.

By the time you find two or more carpenter ants in your home, a nest is likely too close for comfort. Left unchecked, wood damage can be extensive and costly. When it comes to protecting your home investment, being proactive makes all the difference!

Think Twice: What Your Single-Serve Coffee Pods Means to the Planet

The real time-saving, convenience issues of our way-too-busy lives notwithstanding, the no-hassle of single-serve coffee pods may come with some detrimental environmental and health issues.

Concern about the environmentally unfriendly non-recyclable, non-biodegradable pods, which generate a ton of plastic waste, has been brewing for several years. A widely quoted statistic: The throw-aways from single-serve market leader Keurig Green Mountain's 2013 production of 8.3 billion K-Cups could circle the Earth 10.5 times. With 2014 company sales increasing to 9.8 billion portion packs, it is said the discarded pods could circle the globe 12 times.

Keurig has committed to producing a fully recyclable version of its blockbuster K-cup by 2020—a date too far off to satisfy critics. Plus, the recyclable pods Keurig has already produced represent only 5% of Keurig's pod market, allegedly because they are incompatible with the millions of Keurig machines currently in offices and homes. The pods are typically too small for most recycling equipment to handle.

Then there's the issue of plastic, a #7 composite that acts like hormones, particularly when heated.

What's a coffee lover to do, especially if you're out for convenience? Keurig's reusable pods sport an aluminum lid. This must be separated from the cup, which requires emptying for the grounds to go through the recycling process.

Keurig does manufacture a reusable filter. Other companies manufacture all stainless or glass coffee makers. But these products require washing.

Perhaps the real find rests with the Rogers Family Company. It's introduced a Biodegradable One Cup that will work in most single-serve brewing systems.

Till next month.

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