



Warning Signs

Because termites either live inside wood or underneath the ground, it can be very difficult for homeowners to see the wood-eating insects. However, termites often leave behind clues that they're feasting on your home.



Wood Damage

The pattern in which subterranean termites feed on a piece of wood is hard to miss. These cellulose-loving insects can leave nothing behind but the wood grain. However, termite damage is usually hidden, due to the insects' habit of eating the wood from the inside out.



Discarded Wings

Even if you miss an exterior termite swarm, it may not be difficult to see that it took place. Soon after swarmers take flight, they shed their wings, leaving small piles of wings behind in spider webs and on surfaces around the home's foundation.



Termite Swarmers

Swarmers from mature colonies typically spread their wings and leave their colonies in the springtime in order to start new colonies. Swarms on the exterior of a home may be missed by homeowners, as they are typically brief events during the morning or afternoon — a time when many of people are not at home. Formosan termites can also swarm at dusk.



Mud Tubes

Subterranean termites build mud tubes (also known as shelter tubes) to serve as bridges between their colony and the wood they are feasting on. These tubes are made of tiny pieces of soil, wood and debris, and are used to protect the colony from predators and conserve moisture.



Termite Mounds

While termites in the United States cause billions of dollars in damage every year, no North American termite species is known to build mounds. Termites that construct their colonies above ground live primarily in Africa and Australia.



Termite Droppings

Because termites don't have the luxury of indoor plumbing, drywood termites often leave behind frass or droppings. These tiny fecal mounds often mean the wood above is infested with termites.



Termite Basics: Identification & Facts

Termites are often called the “silent destroyer” because they may be secretly hiding and thriving in your basement or yard without any immediate signs of damage. While each termite species thrives in different climates and eats different types of food, wall termites require four things to survive — food, moisture, shelter and optimal temperature. Unfortunately, all homes, regardless of their construction type, can provide these ideal conditions for termite infestation.



Winged Termites

Winged termites have no apparent waist and straight antennae. Their wings are equal in size and are shed soon after they swarm. Winged termites usually swarm in the early spring when it is warm and rainy.



Flying Ants

Flying ants have narrow waists and bent antennae. They have two sets of wings, one larger than the other, and usually do not shed their wings. Depending on their species, flying ants may swarm at different times of the year.



Carpenter Ants

Like termites, carpenter ants are wood-destroying insects. Carpenter ants may or may not have wings, and those with wings tend to have the same basic characteristics as other flying ants. Compared to worker termites, carpenter ants are much larger in size, with hard — rather than soft — bodies, and a generally darker color.

Did You Know?

- Termites are one of the rare insect species that live in colonies consisting of an equal number of males and females, even in the soldier caste.
- At least 1,900 species of termites are known to exist on earth.
- While a serious threat to wooden structures, termites are also beneficial. Their ability to digest cellulose allows these insects to help recycle the nutrient base of the planet.
- Termites have existed for approximately 350 million years.
- In recorded history, termites have never developed resistance to any type of pesticide. This is due in part to a queen’s “royal taster system,” in which the colony’s workers taste and process all food before it is fed to the queen.
- Termite workers and soldiers are blind, which means they rely on their sense of touch and chemical signals to help them locate food, moisture and shelter.



Reference: Facts courtesy of Dr. Roger E. Gold, Texas A&M University.



Termite Hot Spots

Your home and its surrounding environment can offer just the right combination of food, moisture and warmth to attract termites. A crack in the foundation as thin as an average business card (1/32") is all the space termites need to move into your home. Areas of insufficient grading, which allow water to form in puddles around the foundation, as well as run-off moisture from air conditioning units and debris in crawl spaces, are all prime targets for termites. Regular inspections of your home by a termite specialist can help identify clues of termite invasion.

Roof Vents, Siding and Windows:

Termites can enter through cracks as thin as a business card, like window joints, roof vents, siding and eaves.

Plumbing:

Leaky plumbing creates moisture conditions that may attract termites, and cracks around plumbing provide entry points. Repair plumbing to avoid access and moisture build-up.

Foam Insulation:

Foam insulation can act as a highway for termites, leading them right to the wood in your home.

Decks and Wooden Fences:

Check for damage and repair as needed.

Firewood and Lumber:

When stacked against the foundation, firewood and lumber offer hidden paths of entry into your home and may allow termites to bypass any protective soil treatment. Keep wood away from your home's foundation and crawl spaces.

Wood Chips and Mulch:

Woody material that retains moisture can attract termites.

Wood-to-Ground Contact:

Many termite infestations result from wood-to-ground contact because it provides termites with easy access to food and moisture, and direct or hidden entry points.

Gutters and Downspouts:

Faulty gutters and downspouts may create excessive moisture conditions that attract termites. Keep gutters and downspouts clean and free of debris.

Crawl Spaces:

Cellulose debris in crawl spaces, like pieces of wood, may attract undetected termites.

AC Condensation Lines:

Termites are attracted to moisture and they may enter your home if the soil next to the foundation is continuously moist. Divert water from foundation to avoid build-up.





Termite Treatment

There are many different types of termite treatments available to homeowners, so how will you know which one is best for your home? This decision should be made carefully, following careful research of the options recommended by your trusted termite specialist. Because your home is unique, it is important that you work closely with your termite specialist to develop an appropriate and effective termite treatment plan.

Subterranean Termite Treatment Options:

Liquid Application with Repellent or with Non-Repellent

These types of treatments can be used inside and outside your home, and can also be injected directly into an infested area. Repellent products do not attract termites, but instead make an area unappealing to termites. If a termite does find its way through a repellent product-treated barrier, the termite will be controlled within minutes or hours after encountering the product. On the other hand, non-repellent products are not easily detected by termites, so the insects do not know to avoid the treated area. Forager termites are the first to confront these non-repellent products, which are then shared with the rest of the colony — effectively controlling the colony's members.



Liquid Application with Bait and Monitoring System

This system uses a combination of liquid treatment at the entry points and infestation sites of a home, as well as termite monitoring stations at various locations around your house. If your termite professional detects termites, the monitoring stations are replaced with bait stations. Termites will then ingest the bait and share it with their nest mates, leading to effective control of the colony.

Drywood Termite Treatment Options:



Wood Treatment

Odorless and immediately effective, wood treatment offers protection against further termite infestations. This treatment can be applied directly to the wood or injected into bare wood.

Entire Structure Treatment or Fumigation

With the ability to treat every area of your home, entire structure treatment, or fumigation, is often recommended when multiple termite colonies are found in one structure. Fumigation involves a tent that envelops your home or business before termite specialists release gas, which spreads throughout your home to reach every crack and crevice that may be harboring termites. Since each infestation is unique, be sure to partner with your termite specialist to create a customized plan to treat your home.

What Should I Look for in a Termite Specialist?

You may realize that you have termites in your home after you identify certain warning signs. Similarly, you can also recognize a qualified termite specialist by certain signs. A qualified termite specialist should possess the following qualities:

- Employment with a licensed pest control company
- Advanced knowledge of construction and home building
- Expert knowledge of termite identification and biology
- Understanding of the local and state ordinances regarding pest control
- Knowledge of the various treatment methods and resources to customize a treatment plan for your home
- Awareness of EPA-approved materials and environmental standards
- Ability to provide detailed written notes of the preliminary inspection
- Confidence in a guarantee of service from a stable company with a reputation for providing effective termite prevention, treatment and control