



Washington  
State Department of  
Agriculture

# NORTHERN GIANT HORNET: What Gardeners Need to Know

Since Dec. 2019, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) has confirmed the detection of several northern giant hornets in Whatcom County. Hornets have been reported by local residents, trapped, and found in nests. They can kill an entire beehive in a matter of hours.

## Risk to gardeners and gardens

- 1. Direct damage to soft fruits.** While northern giant hornets primarily feed on honey bees and other insects, they have also been known to eat soft fruit. This could result in damaged fruit in your garden.
- 2. Reduced pollination.** Because northern giant hornets can destroy entire honey bee hives, this can reduce the number of pollinators available to pollinate your garden.
- 3. Beehive attacks on your property.** Once northern giant hornets begin a group attack on a beehive, they will defend it as aggressively as they would their own nest. During this time, they are very likely to sting people approaching that hive.
- 4. Stings: allergic reactions and more.** Northern giant hornets do not generally bother people. However, they will sting if they feel threatened. They can sting repeatedly and their venom is more toxic than that of local bees and wasps. Stings can be serious and even life threatening if you are allergic or receive repeated stings. You could be at risk for stings if you:
  - get too close to a nest (they are known to nest in the ground in forested areas or in tree cavities and - more rarely - human structures)
  - swat at them
  - disturb them when working in your garden or managing property (weed whacking, pruning — especially in forested areas, applying pesticides, etc.)

*Please note that typical beekeeping attire will not protect you from northern giant hornet stings.*

## What gardeners can do

WSDA is currently working to locate and eradicate populations of northern giant hornet in Washington. Learn about Northern giant hornet and how to identify it. If you encounter a northern giant hornet, note the location, obtain a photograph if you can safely do so, and report it. You can report northern giant hornet using these methods:

- Visit [agr.wa.gov/hornets](https://agr.wa.gov/hornets)
- Call 1-800-443-6684
- Email [hornets@agr.wa.gov](mailto:hornets@agr.wa.gov)

Learn more about northern giant hornet at [agr.wa.gov/hornets](https://agr.wa.gov/hornets).



*ABOVE: These northern giant hornets will leave piles of dead bees, most of them headless, outside their beehive, similar to that shown in the photo above. This photo is courtesy of Washington beekeeper Teddy McFall. ( WSDA has not been able to confirm that this is definitely the result of an AGH attack. )*

