

# Preventing Bites and Stings: Precautions take Outdoors

By BHS Insurance

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Fall is a beautiful and often very busy season for Gardens and Arboretums, with many guests visiting to enjoy cooler weather, Fall colors, and other seasonal events. Fall is also a busy season for staff working outside in preparing the landscape for the Winter months ahead.

Many types of animals and insects are also busy preparing for Winter; bee hives wasp and hornet nests have swelled to 100's of insects and food sources have diminished over the Summer months. In addition to Bees Wasps and Hornets there are a number of common outdoor pests that can cause mild to serious injury or illness when encountered in a Garden:

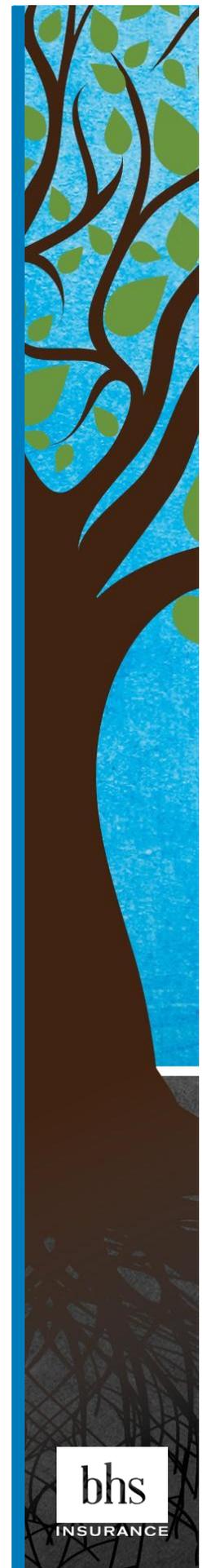
- Fleas, lice and mites (infection)
- Mosquitoes (West Nile virus, St. Louis encephalitis, Eastern Equine Encephalitis)
- Spiders (poisonous bites)
- Ticks (Lyme disease, typhus and Rocky Mountain spotted fever)
- Rodents including squirrels (carry disease)
- Snakes (poisonous venom)
- Bats (rabies)

## PREVENTION

The most appropriate prevention is to educate your staff and guests of potential insects /animals that are a concern in your area. There should be plans in place with animal control and pest control consultants to work to protect the natural environment, as well as keep guests and staff safe.

Consider the following basic safety tips as you plan:

- Provide appropriate training, protective gear and products to keep staff safe while working.
- Evaluate the work site before you begin. Power equipment will stir up stinging insects.
- Avoid wearing fragrances, scented lotions and brightly colored clothing all of which are attractive to bees, wasps and hornets.
- Never feed or attempt pet squirrels. Never touch a rodent dead or alive.
- Do not approach nests or dens.
- Never pick up, disturb or corner a snake. Develop a strategy to safely relocate.
- Know and identify poisonous spiders common to your locale and have a plan to address.
- As much as possible schedule work times in areas of wetlands, dense woods, fields and brush when risks to staff are lowest.
- Keep your work areas clean.



- Control food and garbage collection; empty and wash bins on a regular basis, as they are attractive to a variety of pests.
- Collect fallen fruit from trees that are attractive to a variety of insects and animals.

## PROTECTION

Since it is not always possible to avoid interaction with insects and animals, taking appropriate protective measures is important:

- Use insect or other types of repellent to deter contact.
- Keep as much of your skin covered as possible. Pay attention to cuffed areas such as ankles and wrists.
- Wear clothing made of tightly woven material, and tuck pants into work boots.
- Use caution when working near nests and hiding places, such as rock piles, lumber piles, tree stumps, old buildings and outdoor restrooms.
- Check skin for clinging ticks following working in any areas prone to ticks.

## RESPONSE

Have a response plan in place for staff or visitor encounters with the most likely form of pest injury in your Garden. Most often that will be the stinging insects; train staff and first responders on the symptoms of an allergic reaction to bee or other insect stings. It is estimated that in the US between 1,000,000 and 2,000,000 people are allergic to stinging insect venom. The key symptoms as noted by the Merck Medical Guide that require immediate medical attention include:

- A feeling of uneasiness, tingling sensations, and dizziness.
- Generalized itching and hives
- Wheezing and difficulty breathing
- Swelling of the lips and/or tongue
- Collapse and loss of consciousness

Be aware that if any of these symptoms occur dial 911 for immediate assistance. Anyone who has been stung in the past and developed any of these symptoms will very likely have them again. Encourage staff to keep needed medication or EpiPen on hand if they have a serious allergy to stings and to wear a medical alert while working. Gardens should consider having trained staff to administer an EpiPen if needed.

The [CDC website](#) has fact sheets and sample posters you can use as well to help you in training staff and volunteers.

Please contact the BHS Garden team if we can assist as you plan for the busy Fall Season, #1-800-350-7676.

