

Egg at bottom of cell

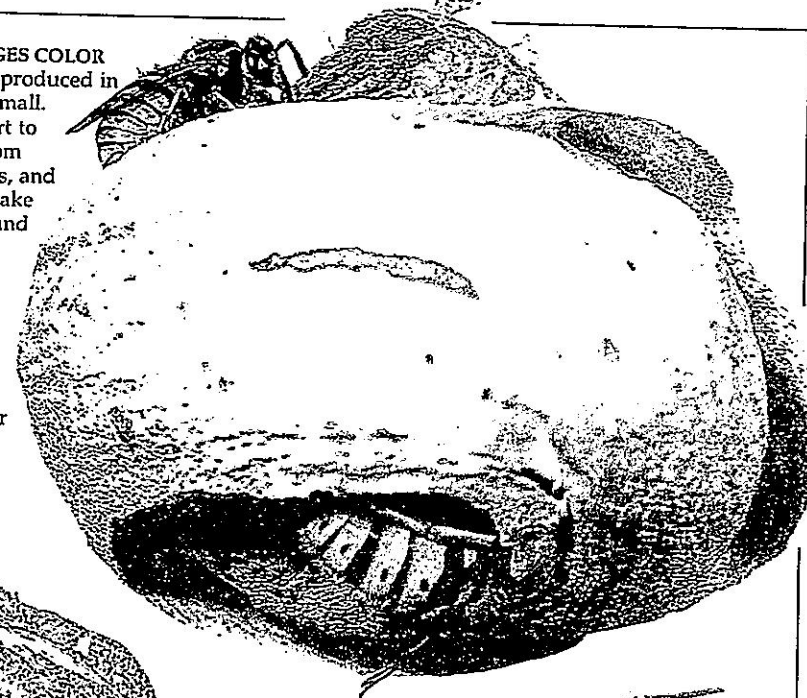
Growing larva

Pupae in silk-capped cells

GRUBS WITH CAPS ON

When the larvae are fully grown, just before they pupate, they spin their own silken cap to close their cell. A few days later the first set of workers emerges and the nest can start to grow.

4 THE NEST CHANGES COLOR
The first workers produced in a nest are often very small. They immediately start to collect wood fibers from many different sources, and so the "paper" they make is often multicolored and striped. Wasps can often be seen on fence posts, scraping the surface in a series of parallel lines. Inside the nest the old paper envelopes are chewed away to make room for larger combs of cells.



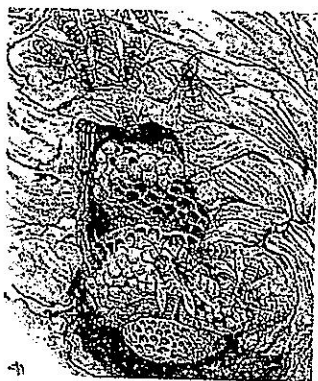
Darker speckles on walls may be the result of some of the workers having fed on poisonous, treated wood

The workers scrape fibers from many different types of wood, making the paper multicolored

5 HOW MANY WASPS?
A large nest of common wasps may measure as much as 18 in (45 cm) in diameter and may contain more than 500 adults in summer. Between spring and autumn it will produce several thousand individuals, most of whom die from exhaustion. Fresh eggs are laid in the cells of each comb as soon as they become vacant.



CROSS-SECTION
This old engraving, although stylized, shows how the envelopes surround the comb of cells in a young nest. Older nests will have four or five horizontal combs.



UNDERGROUND NESTS
The common wasp often builds nests underground. As the nest grows the workers have to dig soil and stones away to provide more room. Sometimes small piles of stones can be found near the entrance to the nest.

6 THE NEXT GENERATION
In summer, the wasps construct several cells which are larger than normal. The grubs developing in these cells are given extra food. These larger grubs develop into males and queens, which fly from the nest and mate. The fertilized queens then find a quiet place to overwinter before starting a new nest the following spring.

