

dr. bug's bugbytes

BY ROBERT CAMERON

Bald-faced Hornets

In fact, bald-faced hornets are not hornets at all but are wasps in the same group as yellow jackets. They get their name not because they are out and out liars but because they are black with white faces and body markings as opposed to the black and yellow markings on yellow jackets.

Bald-faced hornets are large wasps and queens can be quite impressive ranging in size up to greater than 20 mm (3/4 inch). They almost always build exposed nests, either hanging from the branches of trees or shrubs or on the sides of buildings. Large nests of 35 cm x 60 cm (14 x 24+ inches) are not uncommon. I have found several nests larger than this in attics over the years. Because nests are often built in the foliage of trees and shrubs, they are often not noticed until the leaves fall in late autumn. Queens, which have overwintered, start new nests in late April or May. The 'paper' like material used in nest construction is made from chewed fibers and a salivary secretion, which are mixed together. Fibers are often taken from the surface of weathered wood, dead plants and even from paper or cardboard. Attractive colour striations are often visible on the surface of the nest representing different fiber sources that have been used. Mature nests will have 3 or 4 layers of combs with more than 1000 cells in which the eggs are laid, and larvae reared. Worker numbers range from 100 to 400 but may be more in a large nest.

Bald-faced hornets do not tend to be as aggressive as yellow jackets and are more tolerant of activity near their nests. They are in fact quite beneficial, as they will feed on a variety of insect pests including flies and yellow jackets. However, they will attack if provoked, and their stings can be painful. They will chase intruders tenaciously for some distance. I do not recommend letting yourself be stung several times just to see what it feels like. Nests that are high up in trees or in other out of the way places can be left as the entire colony dies in the fall. Old nests are not reused. Only the fertilized queens, which leave the nest in late summer, over winter. Control should be done carefully as it can be an adventure if things go wrong. Use a wasp and hornet blaster if you try it yourself and do it at night or very early in the morning before they are active. If you use a bright light when doing it at night remember, they can then see as well as you can. People who are allergic to wasp and bee stings should consider using the services of a pest control professional.

Nests of bald-faced hornets make great specimens for school projects. It is best to wait until late fall and use nests that have been abandoned. If you try to use a nest that has been treated and the colony killed, it will still contain numerous dead larvae and adults. These will 'stink to high heaven' as they start to decay in the late summer heat.



PHOTO BY CATHY MCLEOD

Almost outshining the mom-to-be was the beautiful cake made by my friend Heather. It was the hit of the party and made a spectacular centre piece as well.

I have an idea

BY CATHY MCLEOD

Baby Shower Having a rattling good time

A good friend of mine was in need of a shower, rather her baby was, no wait... she was having a baby and needed a shower. Well, you get the picture.

The first thing to decide was what type of shower. I decided on a "Times of the Day". I truly love this idea; it lessens the possibility of duplicate gifts and eases the stress for the guest. Here is a list of what I used:

- Changing time
- Play time
- Fashion time - Newborn
- Fashion time - 0-3 months
- Fashion time - 3-6 months
- Mommy time
- Laundry
- Memory time
- Story time
- Meal time
- Bed time
- Bath time
- ...and the ever popular
- Cocktail time

The invitation was written with the complete list of "Times of the Day" with the appropriate time circled for each guest. This way we could assign and regulate the gifts. If the guest of honour needed more of one thing, such as bath items, then we circled bath time on two or three invitations. Just be aware that you may get more than one big item such as a tub in this case. This method works beautifully for clothing.

Another idea is to write on the invitation that with each package of diapers brought you will be entered into a draw. This can get a little pricey for everyone but if you can swing it then do it. Gift certificates are always a good idea for a prize.

"CUTESY OR SOPHISTICATED"

Next on the list was what general feel or theme did we want? Did we want cutesy or sophisticated? We chose sophisticated and opted for ethereal fairies and the colour purple (would have been better off renting the movie). Nice idea but try to find things to coordinate. Be very careful choosing sophisticated. Wow, is it hard to maintain that feel with all the baby shower stuff out there?

It's nuts really. Do the manufactur-

ers expect the baby to put this thing on? Everything is duckies, or bunnies, pink and blue and oh so infantile. (I guess that's the point, but really!) Even the favours can get ridiculous, building blocks, booties etc. Oh yeah, I can't wait to go to my next baby shower and get diaper pins. Maybe I will really luck out and get a soother!

I think they forget that a room full

"A POPULAR GAME IS TO MICROWAVE A CHOCOLATE BAR IN A DIAPER"

of adult women gets together and not a room full of preschoolers. Now, before you twist off my head like a Barbie doll, I realize that it is all part of the spirit and charm of a baby shower, but c'mon when a popular game is to microwave a chocolate bar in a diaper, that's when I'm outta there!

We realized we were running out of time when it came to buying or making decorations. That's when we compromised with the cutesy look. So, in came the storks and the bunnies and the frills and the balloons and everything impossibly pink and blue. I must admit I got a little carried away myself. For nametags I cut out adhesive-backed felt in shapes of teddy bears, carriages, rattles and yes, baby bottles. I then printed up each guest's name on labels and affixed those to the cutouts. I even made carriage and rattle shaped cookies!!! Both ideas were a tremendous hit!

The cake was a fantastic confection, made by my very talented neighbour, Heather, in the shape of ABC building blocks. As the guests left I had a basket full of teddy bear stamped paper bags, hole punched and tied with raffia. These were filled with dollar store goodies to show our appreciation for them coming to our soiree. If I had more time I would have stamped fairies on plain white bags, but, oh well!

No matter what type of shower you want there are plenty of ways to go about it. Just remember to keep it thoughtful and personal and have fun... even if you do end up with a soother!

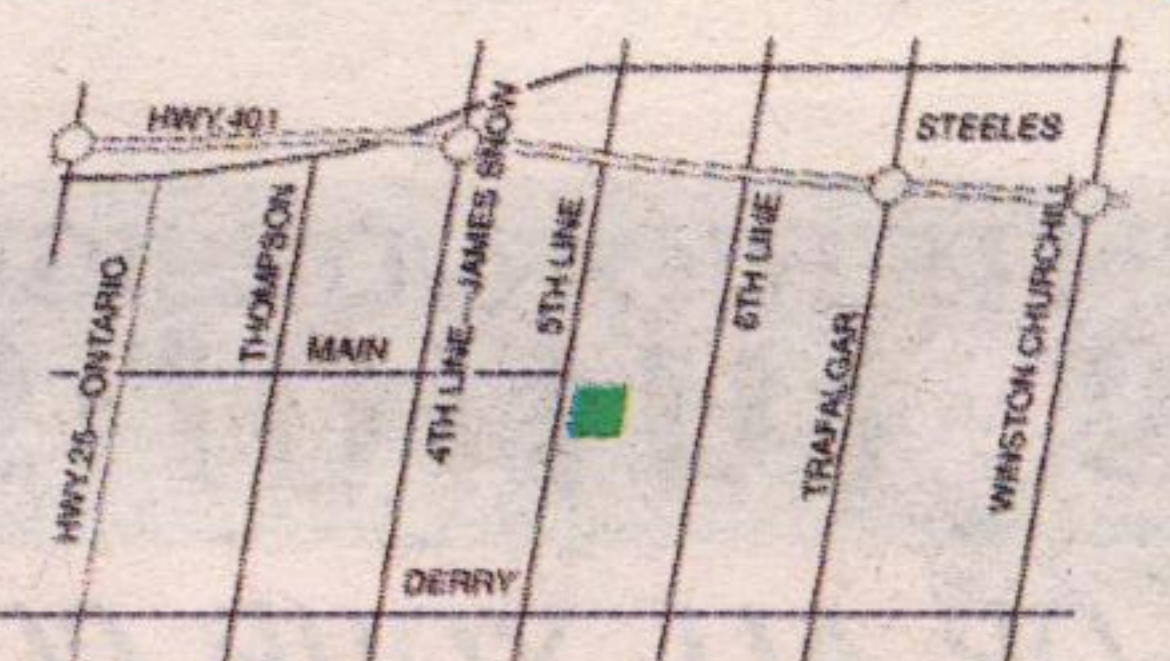
Taylor Nursery

AUGUST is time to:

- ...plant fall flowering mums & perennials
- ...create a backyard water feature
- ...plant trees/shrubs to get established before winter

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