



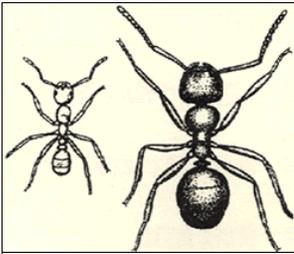
ANTS IN THE HOUSE

INJURY

There are many types of ants that may be found in houses. Some are actual household pests, while others occasionally wander in to look for food or water.

Ants are often nuisance pests, and just their presence can be upsetting. They often get into foods and feed on them. Some species crawl over refuse, carrion, or sewage, which may afford them an opportunity to carry the causal organisms of some diseases. Food contamination can also occur and may result in allergic reactions by certain sensitive people. Some ants damage wooden structures, and others undermine slabs or patio stones. However, we should not forget that ants are beneficial in their natural habitat because they help clean up the environment.

DESCRIPTION



Ants have three body regions (head, trunk, and gaster) distinctly defined by narrow constrictions. They have elbowed antennae, and the gaster is attached to the thorax by a waist that consists of one or two small separated segments.

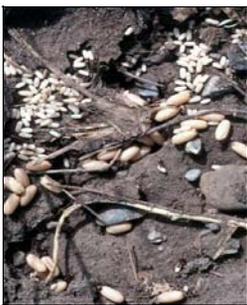
There are three distinct castes of ants—queen, male and worker. There may also be different forms of each caste. Ants always live in societies known as colonies. Workers are wingless, but at mating time swarms of males and females are produced, usually winged.

LIFE HISTORY

Adult winged males and females emerge from their cocoons and eventually leave the nests. Emergence of large numbers of ants (swarming) usually occurs at certain times and often this is the only time we notice the ants at all. Males seek out females in the swarm; mating usually occurs in the air. Males die soon after the mating flight, while the female (queen) starts a new nest. She removes her wings, forms a small cell, and starts a new colony by laying several eggs. The young queen tends the eggs and the larvae that hatch from them feeding them by trophallaxis. Some of the food comes from the breakdown of the wing muscles, but if there is a shortage of food a few of the larvae may be eaten also. The queen does not leave the cell to forage for food except in some primitive hunting ants.



Queen Ant



Ant Pupae

The surviving larvae mature, form pupae with or without spun cocoons, and finally emerge as adult ants. The workers are sterile, wingless females. The first workers are dwarfs, called nanites. When the workers emerge, the queen retires as nursemaid and concentrates on her job of egg production. The nanites take over as nursemaids for the next batch of eggs—they hunt for food outside the nest and do a better job of rearing larvae. Under their care the larvae produce normal-sized workers. Adult workers may live for weeks or up to two years or more. Queens have been known to live for as long as 20 years.

Helping You Put Knowledge to Work

After a colony is well established, some of the larvae will develop into males and females, which will take off in the mating flight.

MANAGEMENT

Since ants are frequently attracted from outdoor colonies by food odors, store food in tight containers or refrigerate it. Rinse out food containers thoroughly before tossing them into the trash or recycling bin. Ants are often searching for either sweets or grease as food. They do, however, feed on other foods including meats, dairy products, pastries, fruits, animal fats and vegetable oils as well as on dead or live insects. If ants are found indoors, thoroughly clean areas where ants occur or gather. Search for the routes of entry and seal off with caulking compound. Ants will enter the house in search of food, but if none is present, will leave again.

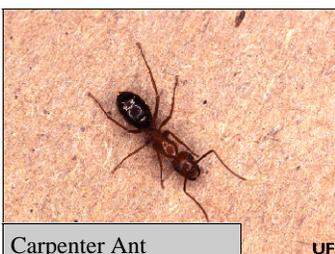
Traps containing baits of boric acid or other poisons will control some kinds of ants effectively, especially those looking for sweets, but they may be slow or ineffective in controlling others. Traps attract ants to the poison without the need to apply the poison throughout the environment.

If ants continue to appear after treatment, you should try to locate the ants' nests. Note the surfaces they crawl over, where the ants come from and where they go after feeding. This will help you determine if the ants are inside or coming in from out of doors, and is often helpful in locating the nest. It is not always possible to locate the nests—inside ants often nest between floor and subfloor, in walls, behind baseboards, beneath cracked basement floors, in decaying or rotting (often near leaky plumbing) wood or even in piles of papers. In some cases removing part of a wall or floor may even be necessary, but it is not always possible to do so. **Sorptive dusts or desiccants or boric acid dusts** can be useful in wall voids where ants are present.

Spot treatment of the nests and/or foraging trails with an insecticide may be needed in some ready-to-use containers. A small paintbrush may be helpful in treating many areas, especially where drift could be a problem. Follow the manufacturers' directions carefully when using any pesticide. NEVER USE INSECTICIDES ON FOOD PREPARATION SURFACES OR IN AREAS WHERE CHILDREN OR PETS FREQUENT. Household formulation of **bendiocarb, propoxur (Baygon), resmethrin or silica gel plus pyrethrum** are registered for ant control. For nests indoors, apply the material as near as possible to where you believe the nests are located. Apply to nearby surfaces and into any cracks or crevices that ants can use to enter a room. Do not treat entire wall or floor surfaces, but limit treatment to places frequented by the ants. Where you do not reach the nests directly, give the treatment a few days to take effect—the ants need to come out and crawl over the residual insecticide deposit.

If nests are out of doors, boiling water (**home remedy***) poured on shallow nests may be effective. If insecticides are needed, either **Baygon, malathion or resmethrin** are recommended. Follow the manufacturers' directions for rates and application methods.

Some of the ants which may be found in houses include: (1) Carpenter ants (see New York State Tree Pest Leaflet F-3 entitled "Carpenter Ants" for additional information about these wood-infesting ants; (2) Little black ant (*Monomorium minimum*); (3) Pharaoh ant (*Monomorium pharaonis*); (4) Odorous house ant (*Tapinoma sessile*); (5) Acrobat ants (*Crematogaster spp.*); (6) Cornfield ants (*Lasius spp.*); (7) Yellow ants (*Acanthomyops spp.*); (8) Thief ants (*Solenopsis spp.*); and (9) the Pavement ant (*Tetramorium caespitum*). See page three for additional photos.

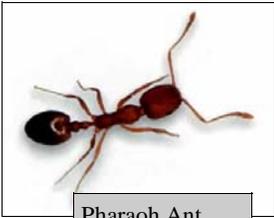


Carpenter Ant

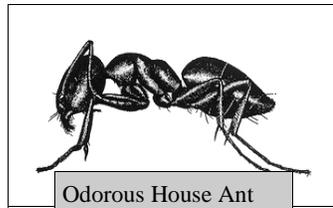
UF



Little Black Ant



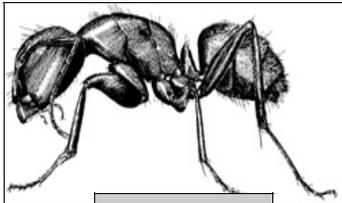
Pharaoh Ant



Odorous House Ant



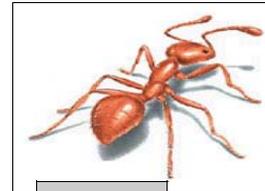
Acrobat ant



Cornfield Ant



Yellow Ant



Thief Ant



Pavement Ant

This publication contains pesticide recommendations. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly and human errors are still possible. Some materials mentioned may no longer be available, and some uses may no longer be legal. All pesticides distributed, sold or applied in New York State must be registered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use in New York State should be directed to the appropriate Cornell Cooperative Extension specialist or your regional DEC office. Read the label before applying any pesticide.

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***HOME REMEDIES**—These remedies are **not** endorsements by Cornell University of any product or procedure. They are not recommendations for use either express or implied. Neither Cornell University, nor its employees or agents, are responsible for any injury or damage to person or property arising out of the use of this information.

Homemade Boric Acid Bait for Ants

This recipe, reprinted by popular demand, can control colonies of ants foraging for food in or around your home or office. The bait attracts ants, which take it back to their colony, where it kills many other ants.

- 3 cups water
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon boric acid or borax

If the ants are not attracted to sweet foods, try protein like canned cat food. Put 1 cup bait in each of 3 to 5 small screw top jars. Loosely half fill containers with cotton wool. Then saturate in bait solution. Screw on lids. Close with adhesive tape. Make 2 or 3 small holes in lids. Keep away from pests and children.

Black ants, red ants, fire ants - America's least favorite party crashers can be found everywhere. Here's how to safely prevent them from taking over your home and garden.

Steps

1. Determine why they are entering your property and eliminate the food, water and/or housing that they need to survive.
2. Promptly clean after meals and take all trash out of your home.
3. Move outdoor trash and recycling bins as far from your home as possible.
4. Tightly wrap and store food set out on kitchen counters.
5. Refrigerate all perishable food, especially in the summer, when fruits and vegetables may spoil quickly.
6. Remove pools of standing water. Ants get thirsty too.
7. Seal up cracks. The least toxic method is 100 percent silicon caulk.
8. Sprinkle powdered red chili pepper, paprika, dried peppermint or borax on ant trails, in cracks and near entryways to deter them from moving in.
9. Rid your garden of aphids, whiteflies and mealybugs. These sap-feeding insects excrete "honeydew," a sugary favorite of ants.
10. Spray or paint sticky barriers made out of tanglefoot products on plants and trees. These barriers prevent ants from climbing up stems and trunks to feed.
11. Create liquid bait by mixing 1 tsp. boric acid with 2 1/2 fluid oz. corn syrup or honey. Heat until the boric acid dissolves. In an eyedropper, add equal amounts of water and solution to drop in places ants frequent for 2 weeks.
12. Make a natural repellent of citrus peelings and water in a blender and pour it over the anthill.
13. Drown out ants by pouring boiling water over the mounds and into the cracks where they dwell. Roughly 3 gallons of water per mound ought to do the trick.

Tips & Warnings

- Repeat all of the above as necessary. Ants are hardy creatures, and it's difficult to get rid of them.
- Fire ants are the most notorious of these common pests. Not only do they have a painful bite, they devour gardens and build unsightly mounds that can be up to 2 feet tall. Careful removal by a professional may be the best option. *Source:* http://www.ehow.com/how_3791_rid-ants-naturally.html