

FBMG Help Desk
Question of the Week

Help! We have ants in the house; laundry room, hallway, closet, and living room!

We have had multiple calls and emails on ants...



Ants want a nice place!

Water, Food, Shelter

Ants are the greatest of housekeepers!

They will show up to clean crumbs, pet dander, organic material tracked in, spilt messes, etc.



Your home is a veritable smorgasbord

- *Water can be found in the sink, kitchen, laundry room, bathroom, dog bowl, flowerpot saucer etc.*
 - *water could be scarce outside due to drought conditions or*
 - *there could be too much puddling from an irrigation system or*
 - *there could be a leak somewhere*
- *Food can be found anywhere it is served, stored, carried, prepared or eaten.*
- *Shelter can be found under the slab, in a crawl space, baseboards, in the walls etc.*

Become a detective!

CSI it!

Using your best detective skills, start with examining the outside perimeter of your home.

- Look for where the foundation and soil meet - any signs of activity?
- Are there any plants or trees that may touch your home and may be acting as a vector?
- Any woodpiles, excess mulch or leaves from last fall touching the foundation or walls?
- Are your gutters cleaned out and are the downspouts directed away from the home?

Then go inside, checking all interior walls of your home

Try to trace the trail of ants back to one of these possible points of entry.

- Cracks or gaps in the woodwork, improperly sealed doors or windows, old or worn weatherstripping, etc.
- Are there any dripping faucets or other plumbing leaks?
- Any food sources left unsecured (crumbs, dried drops of liquid or food residue, sugar stored in open container)?
- Excess pet dander?

BE SURE TO CHECK BOTH DAY AND NIGHTTIME - SOME ANTS ARE MORE ACTIVE AT NIGHT



Patience is key.

To Spray or to Bait?

Getting the ants out of your home is a process.

While pesticides and barriers are tempting inside they may be temporary.

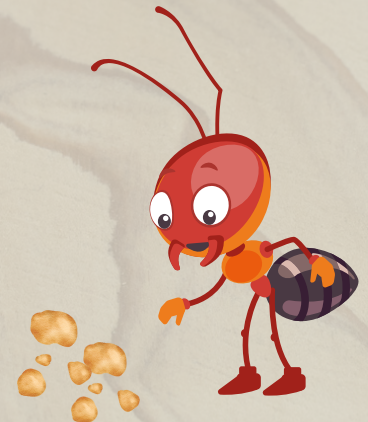


For example some species such as pharaoh ants will split the colony when their environment changes. If a barrier is used they will retreat, create a 2nd queen and start a 2nd colony only to reappear later in 2 places and with greater numbers than before. A spray may kill or discourage those it comes in contact with the ants will most likely return.

Baits are designed for the ants to take back to the colony where they will be eaten and the colony will die.

For best results the bait must be placed where the ants can find it and all other temptation needs to be removed. Make sure to pick up any items that are attracting the ants, vacuum thoroughly, mop to remove ant trails, and wipe down all surfaces. Vinegar water destroys the pheromones that ants follow (the trail). Destroy and discard "scout ants" and place the bait where the ants are coming in.

When using any sprays or baits always follow the manufacturers directions.



There are multiple species of ants, *that invade your home.*



Ants most commonly found in the home are; Pharoah ants, Acrobbat ants, Carpenter ants, Odorus ants, Red Imported Fire ants, and Thief ants.



They usually range in size from 1/16 to 1/2 inches and will eat sweets, fruits, vegetables, grease, meat, animal fats, and the fat in cheese.

Some ants usually nest indoors, while others nest outside until they invade while others can regularly be found nesting in both places. Some bite and some sting while others don't. Most are known to follow trails.



See the following charts for basic information on the aforementioned ants as well as Crazy ants, Tramp ants, and Little Black ants.

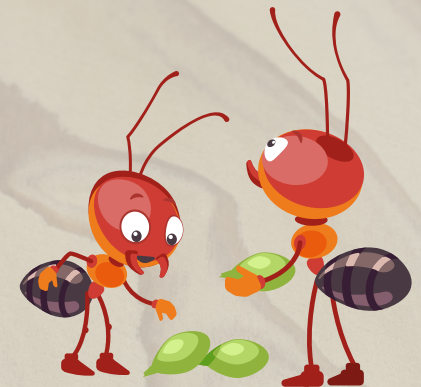


Table 1. Characteristics of some common house-infesting ants of Texas.

Species	Preferred nest locations	Foods preferred indoors	Swarming season	Sting	Bite	Follow trails	Length of workers (inches)
Usually nest indoors							
Pharaoh ants	Near heat and moisture sources	Grease, meats, sweets	None	No	No	Yes	1/16
Usually nest outdoors, but can be found in or on buildings							
Acrobat ants	Protected galleries in mortar and wood	Slight preference for sweets and meats	Early summer to early fall	No	Yes	Yes/No	1/8 to 1/4
Carpenter ants	Usually in stumps and fences (see text)	All foods, sweets	May to late July	No	Yes	No	1/4 to 1/2
Odorous house ants	Under stones or boards, in walls, under floors	Sweets, meats, dairy products	Seldom	No	No	Yes	1/8
Red imported fire ants	Lawns, gardens, plant beds	Meats, grease, sweets	All year	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	1/8 to 1/4
Thief ants	Nests of other ants, soil, cracks in wall	Grease in cheeses and meats, sweets	Late July to September	No	No	No	1/16

Usually nest only in soil outdoors

Argentine ants	Lawns, plant beds, leaf litter, trash piles	Sweets, animal fat	Rare, April and May	No	No	Yes	$\frac{1}{8}$
Crazy ants	Trash piles, tree soil	Sweets, meat	Spring	No	No	No	$\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{8}$
Little black ants	Lawns, under objects, rotten wood	Grease, sweets, meats, fruits, vegetables	May to September	No	No	Yes	$\frac{1}{16}$
Tramp ants	Cracks in or near sidewalks and pavement	Grease, meats, honey	May to June	No	No	Yes	$\frac{1}{8}$

second part of chart Table 1 page 5 of [Managing household ant pests \(B-6183\)](#).

For photos of each of the ants listed on the chart go to [Managing household ant pests \(B-6183\)](#)



***Do you have questions
about your home
landscape and plants?***

***Contact the Fort Bend
Master Gardener Help Desk***

***Email:
FortBendmg@ag.tamu.edu***

***Phone:
281-341-7068***

***The Help Desk is manned
Monday thru Friday,
9am-Noon***



Managing household ant pests (B-6183)

Controlling Pesky Ants in Your Home | Fulton From the Ground Up (uga.edu)Diagnostic sample guidelines - Insects in the City (tamu.edu) Diagnostic sample guidelines

Swarming Insects Indoors - Insects in the City (tamu.edu)

Ants: How to Get Rid of Ants in the House | The Old Farmer's Almanac

<http://www.extension.org/pages/30057/ants-and-their-affinity-for-electrical-utilities>

Insects that infest homes | UMN ExtensionBattling Ants in the Home | Extension Marketing and Communications (ncsu.edu)

Sugar Boric Acid Bait for Ants 03.31.12 (hawaii.edu)

1. Colony Budding and its Effects on Food Allocation in the Highly Polygynous Ant, Monomorium pharaonis, Grzegorz Buczkowski & Gary Bennett

[. https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/in1022](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/in1022)

Tiny Ants Around Your Home | Home & Garden Information Center (clemson.edu)

Argentine Ants | Home & Garden Information Center (clemson.edu)

Ants (illinois.gov)

<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/a-guide-to-house-invading-ants-and-their-control>. You may also submit insect

specimens to NCSU's Plant Disease and Insect Clinic

(<https://projects.ncsu.edu/cals/plantpath/extension/clinic/>).

Ants (purdue.edu) HOUSEHOLD AND STRUCTURAL TERRO® indoor and outdoor ant bait products

Ants: Fun Facts About Ants & Ant Information for Kids (pestworldforkids.org)