

Dealing with ants

Garden Ants

The common varieties of ants generally live outdoors in grass, walls or under paving, but can and do travel widely in search of food. They can be a problem in our homes and commercial premises, especially if the sweet sugary foods which they are so often attracted to, are left open to them.



They are not dangerous, though they often become a nuisance. As with all insects, they may spread a small numbers of germs around food areas, so special care with cleaning is important while they are present.

Life Cycle

Ants live in groups and different types of ants are responsible for certain duties within the colony. The worker garden ants (sterile females about 3mm long) have the responsibility of building and extending the nest, looking after larvae and foraging for food. It is whilst they look for this food that they can be a nuisance to us.

The queens (fertile females about 15mm long) usually remain in the nest. In early July, winged fertile male and female ants are produced and between July and September they swarm from the nest and mate in mid-air.

After mating, the males perish but each fertilised female sheds her wings and digs a hole in the soil, where she will spend the winter. In late spring, this queen emerges and lays her eggs, which hatch in 3-4 weeks. The larvae are fed by the queen until fully grown when they pupate and eventually hatch and become the first brood of worker ants. The entire cycle takes about 2 months to complete. These workers then take over the food gathering and brood rearing duties. They usually feed on nectar from flowers, seeds, small dead insects and sugary secretions produced by greenfly.

Under favourable conditions, a nest may persist for several years. If worker ants are causing a nuisance in the house it may be necessary to destroy them.

Control

The first thing to be done is to find the nest or nests. Watch the ants as they enter and leave the house, preferably on a hot day when they are most active. They will tend to follow set trails back to the nest. If you have difficulty, put down some sweet food (eg jam) near some ants. Large numbers will then be attracted and can be traced back to their nest.

Nests are usually outside the building in sandy soil, especially under paving or walls, within a few metres of the house. The only visible sign is often a scattering of very fine soil around the entrance hole.

Pharaoh's ants -

Some species of tropical ants occasionally infest our homes or work places. They can only survive indoors where it is permanently warm. These ants are much smaller than the common garden ants and usually pale brown in colour. Treatment of these infestations is different to that described here. Ask for our leaflet about them if you think they are your problem.

Occasionally, it is not possible to find the ants' nest. In this case, you should watch the ants carefully to see where they are getting into the house. Common entry points are around the door and window frames, ventilators, airbricks and waste pipes.

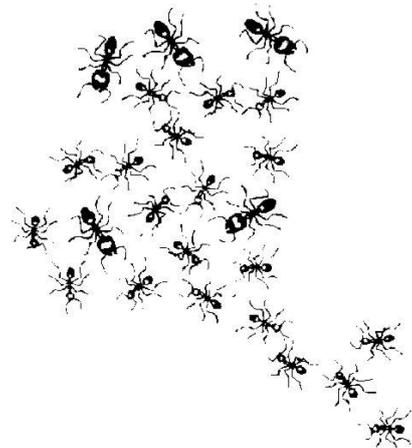
Try to seal all entry points and powders, gels and aerosols are available to treat ants and ant nests.

Beware

Do **NOT** be tempted to block airbricks or other means of permanent ventilation essential for preventing dampness and toxic fumes within the structure.

Treatment

Harrow Council offers an affordable, chargeable service for domestic and commercial premises for ants. Please visit our website or telephone us for further information.



Advice on the identification and control of all household pests is provided free of charge and is available by phone, email or via our website.

Harrow Council
Community Directorate
P O Box 18, Civic Centre
Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 2UT

☎ 020 8424 7666
Fax: 0845 280 1845

E-mail: pest.control@harrow.gov.uk
Web site: www.harrowcommercialservices.co.uk
www.harrow.gov.uk