

HOW TO KEEP ANTS OUT OF YOUR ATLANTA-AREA HOME



While ants are present across the globe, a number of nasty specimens plague the southeastern United States. Without proper preventative measures, Georgia homeowners can find themselves at risk of painful bites and stings, contaminated food, and a host of other problems.

This guide will show you how to get rid of all the different kinds of ants that are native to Georgia. Before we dive in, we'd like to familiarize you with some key terms, and the four common types of ant insecticides.

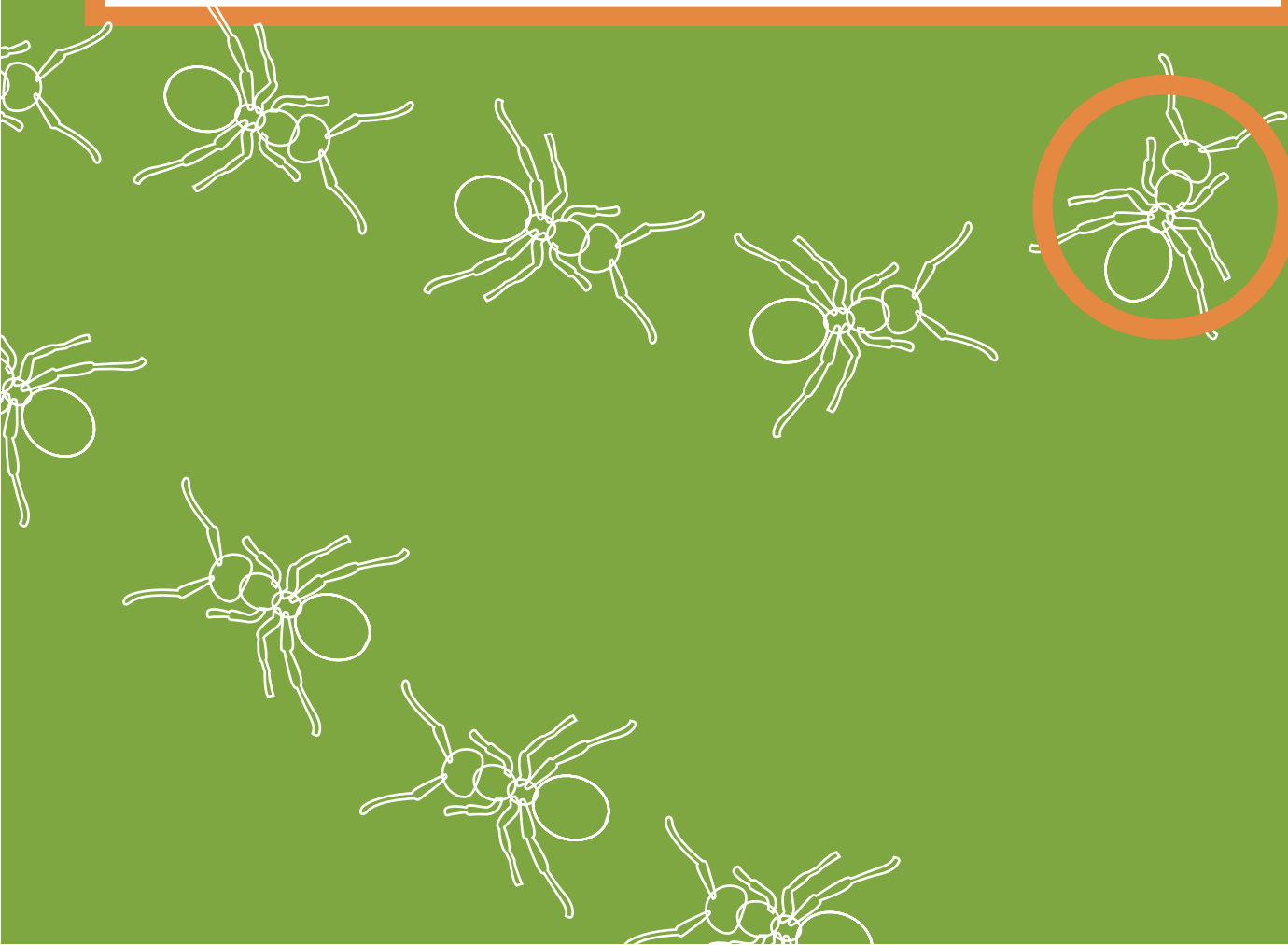




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ANT INSECTICIDES

SPRAYS Liquid chemicals are sprayed (along areas where ants are likely to trail or forage), killing any ants that come into contact. Particularly useful for individual nests and perimeter treatments.

BAITS Small food sources filled with insecticide that can be placed around the perimeter of the home. Once ants find the bait, they recognize it as food, take it back to the nest, and spread the insecticide throughout the entire colony. While slower-acting than sprays, baits are much more effective at eliminating entire colonies. Baits come in three main “flavors”: sugar-based, protein-based, and fat-based. Depending on where each individual colony is in their progression, they may choose one over the other.

DUSTS Dry formulation of contact insecticide. Generally used in gardens or in wall crevices where liquid treatment could cause property damage.

FOAMS Foam formulation of contact insecticide. Like dusts, generally used in wall crevices where its ability to expand can reach surfaces that other methods can't.

Each insecticide has its strengths and weaknesses, so many of our recommended treatments will require the use of two or more.

KEY TERMS

TRAILS Trails of ants walking in single file as they move to and from their nests while foraging for food. After identifying a trail, it can be used to find the local colony.

MATING SWARMS Swarms of flying reproductive ants, known as alates, that occur in warmer months as ant queens and kings leave their home nests to form new ones. These can also be used to indicate a nearby infestation.

WALL VOIDS Cracks or crevices formed in the walls of a home where ants will make nests. As you inspect your home, be on the lookout for wall voids as they could lead you to the source of the infestation.

Now that you know the tools of the trade and what to be on the lookout for, let's look at some of the ant species you might come into contact with.

ARGENTINE ANT



IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Size range: 1/12 - 1/8 inch long | Coloration: Dull brown

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION (US)

Southern United States, particularly temperate and damp coastal regions.

WHERE YOU'LL FIND THEM

Like to nest in moist soil next to or underneath buildings that have close access to food and water sources, as well as near sidewalks. Due to their attraction to sweet foods, they're also often found on trees and fruit.

THREAT TO HUMANS

Argentine ant bites can't cause humans physical pain. Argentine ants are known to tend aphid colonies in exchange for access to honeydew, allowing aphids to flourish and cause damage to local farms and crops.

INTERESTING FACTS/BEHAVIORS

Fiercely aggressive, they emit a musty odor when crushed.

Multiple queens will leave the home colony to form their own new colonies, killing and displacing any native ants they find. Unlike most ants, Argentine ants do not have a winged form, and mate in the nest. Nests can grow to form massive supercolonies spanning hundreds of miles. Queens will occasionally leave the nest to help other ants forage for food.

HOW TO GET RID OF THEM

Insecticide sprays are not recommended for Argentine ants, as they can stimulate the queen to lay eggs and make the problem worse. Because there are multiple queens, for the best results combine three liquid baits: a sugar-based bait, a fat-based bait, and a protein-based bait, appealing to Argentine ants' omnivorous diet. Use slow-acting bait, as quick-kill bait won't have time to spread and poison the rest of the colony. Clean the area of as much food competition as possible prior to baiting. Depending on the size, the slow-acting baits should eliminate the colony in under a week. In the meantime, use a non-repellent perimeter treatment to apply a barrier that will keep Argentine ants from entering your home.

CARPENTER ANT



IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Size range: 1/4 - 3/8 inch long (Relatively large)

Coloration: Dark brown-black (Florida carpenter ants are red with a black abdomen)

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION (US)

Present across most of the United States, with a specific subspecies present in Florida and in the southeast.

WHERE YOU'LL FIND THEM

Carpenter ants like moist environments, & can often be found outdoors in rotting, damp, or hollowed-out wood, as well as in firewood piles. Indoors, they are often found in window sills, fascia boards, hollow doors, and behind baseboards.

THREAT TO HUMANS

Carpenter Ants have a bite that's painful to humans. Carpenter ants can damage wooden structures. If they get into the home, they can build a nest inside, leading to severe damage to the home.

INTERESTING FACTS/BEHAVIORS

Named for their preference of creating colonies in damp or damaged wood

Come in two subspecies: black carpenter ants (present across the United States) and Florida carpenter ants (present only in Florida and some surrounding areas).

Carpenter ants are most active at night.

HOW TO GET RID OF THEM

Use both sugar-based and a protein-based slow-acting ant bait. Keep a lookout for trails near or inside your home and apply both nearby. Remove as much open food as possible.

Identify indoor carpenter ant nests or "voids" and drill a small hole (roughly 1/8 inch) in the side and apply a dust or foam insecticide. Do not use a liquid insecticide in a wall void, as it can cause further damage to the wood. Remove foliage, dead trees, and wood around the perimeter that carpenter ants might use as nests. Elevate wood piles and structures off the ground if possible.

Fix any leaks or cracks near the foundation, repair any water damage or wood decay on the house. Form a protective barrier around your home by spraying a non-repellent insecticide to the perimeter of the structure about two feet up the wall of the structure and two feet outward from the base, and around any potential entry points like doors, windows, or A/C units. However, be careful not to spray too close to the bait, as this can prevent ants from eating it.

LONGHORN CRAZY ANT



IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Size range: 1/8 inch long | Coloration: Black with bluish tint
Elongated, horn-like antennae elongated legs and setae, hair-like bristles that cover their bodies.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION (US)

Heavy presence in the southeastern United States with scattered populations in the west and along the east coast.

WHERE YOU'LL FIND THEM

Longhorn crazy ants prefer moist environments. Outdoors, they can commonly be found in damp soil, under rocks and stumps, in timber or compost piles, in potted plants, and in garbage. They are also often found in areas where they have easy access to sweet foods, such as on fruit, plants, and even beehives.

THREAT TO HUMANS

Longhorn crazy ants have a painful sting. They also have a reputation for damaging electrical and computer equipment. The species is known to decimate local insect and animal populations, (even bees and small birds) creating a negative impact on the ecosystem.

INTERESTING FACTS/BEHAVIORS

Named for their erratic, "crazy" movement.
Long-distance foraging habits make it very difficult to locate their nests.

HOW TO GET RID OF THEM

While their unpredictable movements make baiting more difficult, it is still the best option for eliminating a crazy ant colony. Place both a sweet and a protein-based bait together and eliminate any nearby food competition. Eventually, the ants will take the bait and bring it back to the nest. Use a non-repellent insecticide around the perimeter of your home. The poison from one ant will spread to the rest of the colony as they groom one another. As with other ants, seal any potential entry points to the home and trim vegetation near the home. Likewise, clean up any food or spills that could attract them.

TAWNY CRAZY ANT



IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Size range: 1/8 inch long | Coloration: Reddish-brown
Elongated legs and setae, hair-like bristles that cover their bodies.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION (US)

Southeastern United States, with the highest concentration in Texas and along the Gulf of Mexico.

WHERE YOU'LL FIND THEM

Tawny crazy ants are generally found in moist areas, including in damp soil, under rocks and stumps, in timber and compost piles, in garbage, and in potted plants. Due to their heavy concentration in gulf regions, they are also often found in shipping containers and other commerce. Tawny ants are adept at getting into homes. Indoors, they are often found in rotten or damaged wood and in gaps in walls or siding.

THREAT TO HUMANS

Like longhorn crazy ants, the primary threat tawny crazy ants pose to humans is the damage they do to electrical and computer equipment by chewing through insulation and wiring. The accumulation of their dead bodies and nest detritus can also cause overheating, corrosion, and mechanical failures in electrical devices. As with longhorn crazy ants, they have been known to displace insects and even small animals, hurting the local ecosystem. While they cannot sting, they will still bite any humans that they come into contact with.

INTERESTING FACTS/BEHAVIORS

Tawny crazy ants do not form centralized nests or mounds. Prefer moist areas but will travel relatively-long distances in order to forage. Tawny crazy ants are fierce enemies with fire ants, and have developed a protective casing over their bodies that shield them from fire ant stings.

HOW TO GET RID OF THEM

Like their longhorn cousins, tawny crazy ants can be extremely difficult to treat due to their erratic movements and lack of centralized mounds. The best strategy for defending against them is to place a sugar-based and a protein-based bait together place a non-repellent insecticide around the perimeter of the house to create a protective barrier.

FIRE ANT



IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Size range: 1/16 - 1/4 inch | Coloration: Reddish-black
Known for their painful stings

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION (US)

Present nationwide, but the highest concentration is in the southeastern United States.

WHERE YOU'LL FIND THEM

Outdoors, fire ants like open areas with lots of sunlight. They can make nests anywhere, but prefer loose soil or near foundations like rotting logs, tree stumps, and cracks in concrete. In the home, they're often found under bathtubs or next to hot water heaters. They seem to be attracted to electrical currents, and may reside in computers, televisions, electrical junction boxes, etc. They're also often found on exterior woodwork and masonry, which can sometimes provide a point of entry into the home.

THREAT TO HUMANS

The best strategy to counter a fire ant population in your yard is by broadcasting ant bait across the entire yard every year during warm months. After broadcasting, treat individual surviving mounds by taking a rod and poking it deep into the mound. Pour liquid insecticide inside until the mound is thoroughly drenched, ensuring that the queen is killed. Afterward, put more bait in the vicinity (not on top) of each mound.

INTERESTING FACTS/BEHAVIORS

Fire ants expand their territory quickly. A queen from one colony can leave and develop a new one several hundred feet away in a matter of hours. They come in single-queen and multi-queen variants. Single queens stay confined within their limited territory while colonies with multiple queens will see those queens move freely from one mound to another, resulting in a dramatic increase in the number of mounds per acre. Fire ant mounds do not have an opening at the center. Instead, ants enter and exit through underground tunnels.

HOW TO GET RID OF THEM

Most people know fire ants for their painful stings, which can also cause potentially severe allergic reactions. Fire ants are a notoriously invasive species, known to kill and displace other insects and even some small mammals and birds. Fire ants are also responsible for about \$750 million dollars in damage to agricultural assets. They can also damage electronic equipment.

PHARAOH ANT



IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Size range: 1/16 inch

Coloration: Yellow-red coloration on the head and thorax, black abdomen

Other: Visually similar to thief ants

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION (US)

Present primarily across the southern United States.

WHERE YOU'LL FIND THEM

Because of their miniscule size, pharaoh ants can get into almost anywhere but prefer warm areas with access to water. Outdoors, this usually means mounds will be built near drains, sprinkler systems, evaporative cooling units, or outside buildings where a water source is present. Inside, pharaoh ants most commonly make nests in kitchens and bathrooms. They are often found on counter tops, window sills, baseboards, and plumbing, as well as under appliances and carpets and inside toilets, sinks, and drains. They will also get into curtain rods, electrical outlets, and even clothing and linens.

THREAT TO HUMANS

The pharaoh ant does not bite, but causes damage in other ways. Because their small size allows them to get into places that other bugs can't, the primary threat pharaoh ants pose is the contamination of food and other goods. This is especially dangerous when they find their way into hospitals, restaurants, or any area where a large quantity of food is stored.

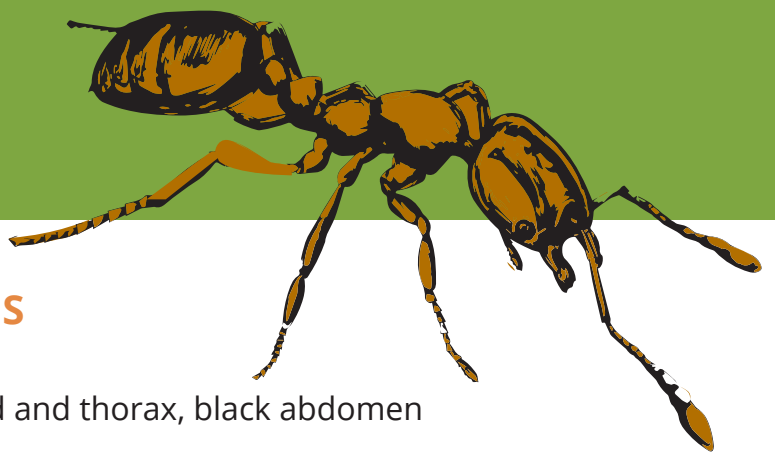
INTERESTING FACTS/BEHAVIORS

Pharaoh ants are incredibly small even by ant standards. They are almost identical in appearance to thief ants, generally distinguishable only by the number of segments on the antennal club (pharaoh ants have three segments, thief ants have two). Pharaoh ants travel comparatively large distances to forage, so even if a trail is found it may not be a good indicator that the nest is nearby. Pharaoh ants will also frequently move out and establish new colonies if the colony is disturbed or over populated, limiting bait's effectiveness.

HOW TO GET RID OF THEM

While most nests will never be found by humans, baiting is still the preferred treatment method for getting rid of pharaoh ants. However, because the ants' small size makes trails difficult to find, and because they switch locations so frequently, even baiting them can be a challenge. For the best results, use both a sugar-based and a protein-based bait. Outdoors, broadcast the bait across the yard. Indoors, place the bait near the at-risk locations listed above. As always, remember to remove as much food competition as possible prior to baiting.

THIEF ANT



IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Size range: 1/16 inch

Coloration: Yellow-brown coloration on the head and thorax, black abdomen

Visually similar to pharaoh ants

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION (US)

Found primarily in the central United States and along the east coast.

WHERE YOU'LL FIND THEM

Outside, thief ants will generally make nests near natural foundations like rocks or rotting wood. Indoors, they are usually found in under countertops, behind baseboards, and in cabinet and wall voids.

THREAT TO HUMANS

Thief ants have both mandibles and stingers, allowing them to bite and sting humans. However, due to their small size, these are rarely painful. Their miniscule size allows them to get into places that would be impossible for bigger insects. They are notorious for getting into and contaminating sealed food items.

INTERESTING FACTS/BEHAVIORS

Thief ants are one of the smallest household ant species found worldwide. Thief ants are distinguishable from pharaoh ants by their antennal club, which has two segments instead of the pharaoh ant's three, as well as by their better-defined trails. Thief ants can survive in almost any climate, getting their name from their parasitic behavior: they build nests very near to, and sometimes inside, other ant nests. They steal food from host colonies. While omnivorous, thief ants prefer high-protein food, which includes the larvae and pupae of the ants they steal from.

HOW TO GET RID OF THEM

Inspect the home all over for trails, paying particular attention to kitchen and bathroom areas. Drench nests with a strong liquid insecticide. Cover the perimeter of the house with a non-repellent insecticide, using a fan spray about three feet high on the side of the building and three-six feet out from the wall on the ground. If you've found thief ants indoors, baiting is the preferred method of eliminating them. These ants prefer greasy foods, so use a slow-acting protein-based bait or the best results. Sweet baits can be effective when protein-based baits are ineffective.

PAVEMENT ANT



IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Size range: 1/16 - 1/8 inch

Coloration: Dark brown-black, with pale legs and antennae

Other: Identified by the spines that run down its back and the grooves on its head and thorax

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION (US)

Found across the United States but heavily concentrated along the east coast.

WHERE YOU'LL FIND THEM

As their namesake implies, outdoors, pavement ants are generally found in cracks on paved surfaces like sidewalks, patios, driveways, roads, and the like. They will also take up residence under stones and next to or inside buildings and building foundations. Indoors, pavement ants are often found in carpets, baseboards, insulation, and wall voids, as well as in sinks, toilets, and other plumbing.

THREAT TO HUMANS

While pavement ants have mandibles and stingers, they rarely bite or sting humans. Like odorous house ants, pavement ants' true threat comes from the symbiotic relationships they form with nearby aphids. In exchange for protecting the aphids, the ants gain access to the honeydew the aphids produce. Overtime, the resulting increase in aphid population can have a severe negative impact on nearby farms and produce.

INTERESTING FACTS/BEHAVIORS

Pavement ant trails are most visible at night, so after the sun has gone down, get a flashlight and do a thorough inspection of the home's exterior. They usually get into homes through cracks and expansion joints in stone slabs or other openings, so be sure to check these areas for trails as well. Pavement ants displace soil around any concrete objects they inhabit, so be on the lookout for this tell-tale warning sign. Once a trail has been found, the best step is to place slow-acting bait nearby where the ants will access it and spread it to the rest of the colony. For the best results, use both a sugar-based and a protein-based bait.

HOW TO GET RID OF THEM

The pavement ant gets its name from its habit of creating nests in paved surfaces. Pavement ants are particularly aggressive against other ants in the spring, during which time colonies attempt to expand and conquer new areas. During these times, pavement ants' extreme aggression can cause them to invade seemingly-impenetrable areas, even spacecraft (pavement ants were observed on the International Space Station in 2014).

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The background of the page features a detailed, light-colored illustration of several ants. One large ant is prominently shown in the upper left, with its head, thorax, and abdomen clearly visible. Another ant is partially visible in the lower right, and a third is in the center. The ants are depicted with fine details of their legs, antennae, and body segments, set against a solid black background.

SOURCES

[How to Get Rid of Ants](#)

[Insecticide Dusts](#)

[Antennal Club](#)

[Meet the Worst Ants in the World](#)

[Common Ant Species: Argentine Ants](#)

[African Ant 'Supercolony' Poised to Invade the Planet](#)

[Carpenter Ant Biology and Habits](#)

[Carpenter Ants: Camponotus Species](#)

[Featured Creatures: Crazy Ant](#)

[Rise of the Crazy Ants](#)

[Computers At Risk From Crazy Raspberry Ants](#)

[Red Imported Fire Ants](#)

[Identifying Fire Ants](#)

[How to Get Rid of Stinky Odorous House Ants](#)

[Animal Diversity Web: Odorous House Ant](#)

[Featured Creatures: Pharaoh Ant](#)

[Get Rid of Tiny Ants in Your Home: the Thief Ant or Grease Ant](#)

[Featured Creatures: Pavement Ant](#)

[All Together Now - A Lesson From Space Station "Ant-stronauts"](#)

[Insect Advice from Extension: Pavement Ants](#)