

ANTS

What do they look like?

The worker garden ant is a large ant 3-5 mm in length and dark brown to black in colour. The Queen is about 12mm long and slightly lighter in colour.

How do you spot them?

The black garden ant is the most common and is found in almost all parts of the country. The ant is an active insect and nests outside, in grass, walls and under paving. It enters buildings in search of food.

How do they affect me?

Foraging worker ants cause a nuisance as they travel widely in search for food, usually following well-defined trails and clustering around a food source. Ants may cause considerable nuisance occasionally invading food prepared for human consumption.

How do they live?

Ants live for about two months, but in good conditions a nest can last for years. Garden ants mate in flight when winged males and females swarm between mid July and mid September. Although swarms may be a nuisance they are harmless and nothing can be done to stop a Nuptial Flight.

After mating the male dies and the female loses her wings and buries herself in the soil over winter. In late spring the female lays eggs which hatch into white larvae in 3-4 weeks.

The larvae are fed by the queen and when fully grown pupate forming the well-seen ant eggs. The worker ants which emerge from the pupae feed new larvae and the queen. The entire cycle takes about 2 months to complete and under favourable conditions a nest may persist for several years.

How do you control them?

In many cases where ants are a problem indoors it is because they have either established a nest beneath the foundations or very close to an outside wall and are finding their way into the building.

Boiling water poured on the nest will control the infestation for a short time. Follow this by puffing an insecticidal powder product into the hole. Select a powder product which lists ants on its label.

Other ways to control ants includes applying a contact insecticide, e.g. ant powder, or use a gel placed on, for example, a small piece of glass, which the worker ants feed on and take back to their brood within the nest. If persistent, the gel may eventually destroy the nest. If you decide to use a powder it should be applied to cracks and crevices along and under skirting boards where ants are a problem. A small amount of powder should be applied to the floor and using a small paint brush, dusted into cracks and crevices. To treat inaccessible areas such as under kitchen units a small hole can be drilled in the plinth, which will allow powder to be dusted into these void spaces.