



## **GARDEN ANT** **(*LASIVS NIGER*)**



This is one of the commonest British ants found in almost all parts of the country. The worker is very dark brown, almost black and about 5mm (1/5in) long. The queen, which is never seen except as described later is about 15mm (3/5 in) long and mid brown in colour. It makes its nest in the soil, in grassland including lawns, at the base of walls, under flat stones and sometimes in hollow trees. Nests are often very numerous near buildings and occasionally may be situated close to or actually in the foundations.

The foraging workers follow fairly well defined trails to their feeding grounds which may be many yards from the nest. They have varied feeding habits. They may enter buildings, often through very narrow crevices, and if food, especially sweet food, is found by one ant there will soon be many others to share the feast. Houses, restaurants and food shops, office buildings and hospitals etc. may be entered this way and the ants may cause a considerable nuisance and some damage but their nests are usually outside the buildings.

During the summer great numbers of winged females (queens) and males are reared in the nest and on one or two warm summer afternoons between mid-July and mid-September they swarm out and take to flight often in quite spectacular numbers. This usually happens simultaneously over a wide area of country. These swarms of flying ants may be a nuisance but they are harmless and nothing whatever can be done about them. Sometimes, if a nest is situated in the foundations, these winged ants may swarm inside buildings. In such instances, the problem may be overcome by the use of a flying insect aerosol spray. Sufferers may take comfort in the knowledge that the trouble will soon cease. During the flight the ants mate and many thousands are eaten by birds and in about two or three hours it is all over; the survivors return to earth, the males soon die, the queens shed their wings and make themselves a cell, generally in the soil where they pass the winter before attempting to start a new nest the following spring. A few - but enough - succeed. Some may find shelter in existing nests but these will generally only tolerate one queen. Under favourable conditions the queen and therefore her nest, may survive for several years.

## **CONTROL OF BLACK ANTS**

### **Use of insecticides outdoors.**

Usually the nest will be situated under a path within about 6m (20ft) of the house. The precise location can often be discovered by following a trail of ants and if the nest can then be exposed, boiling water can be poured into it. Where there is risk that plants may be damaged by such treatment an insecticide dust or spray labelled for control of crawling insects, including ants, should be used. If the nest cannot be found an insecticide dust or spray may be applied around doors and window frames, ventilators and waste pipes to make a barrier to prevent entry into the house.

### **Use of insecticides indoors.**

Where it is impracticable or impossible to prevent ants from entering, sprays, dusts or an aerosol suitable for the control of crawling insects may be used indoors. Application should be in the form of continuous bands around points of entry, along skirting boards, etc., care being taken not to contaminate food with the insecticide. Similarly, insecticidal dust may be sprinkled around points of entry and into cracks.

Ants are experienced by most householders at some time, and whilst being a nuisance pest are of no public health significance. The Council therefore do not offer an eradication service for this pest however the self help measures, as described above, applied regularly, are probably the most cost effective means of control.

If you would like an explanation of this fact sheet in your language or to obtain copies in Braille, on audio tape or large print please contact 01509 634560

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