Managing Argentine Ants Around the Home
Goal: Keep ants out of the house

To effectively manage Argentine ants, use a step-by-step integrated approach

**STEP 1:** INSPECT YOUR HOME INSIDE AND OUT FOR ANTS, INCLUDING POTENTIAL ENTRYWAYS, AND ATTRACTIVE NESTING SITES.

Use a flashlight and systematically inspect around the entire house – inside and out.

**Indoors**
- Focus on baseboards and walls where they meet the floor or ceiling.
- Check potted plants.
- Inspect electrical outlets, vents, electrical fixtures, and under furnishings.
- Open cabinets to inspect pipes and drains.
- Look for possible attractive food sources such as sweets or pet food.

**Outdoors**
- Inspect the walls as high and low as possible.
- Pay attention to where ants were found inside for possible entry points.
- Check for branches of trees or shrubs touching the house and providing a pathway.
- Inspect for ants in trees and shrubs that might be harboring honeydew-producing insects.
- Check potted plants, leaf litter, mulch, rocks, and woodpiles for ant nests, especially in moist areas.
- Look for attractive food sources, such as pet food.
- Note and fix leaky faucets or sprinklers.

**STEP 2:** REMOVE FOOD AND NESTING SITES, AND SEAL UP ENTRYWAYS

After you have completed your inspection, go back and fix any problems you found.

- Seal up all potential entry spots both inside and out with caulk.
- Fix leaky faucets, pipes, or sprinkler heads.
- Manage honeydew-producing insects on trees and shrubs near the house; keep ants out with sticky barriers, or remove plants from the landscape.
- Prune back branches touching the building that may provide pathways for ants.
- Remove woodpiles, piles of debris, litter, or plants next to the house that may provide good nesting sites.

The tools you will need to manage ants depend on how serious your problem is.

**Low-level problem (Temporary invasions):** Ants move in when major weather changes occur – heat wave, big rain. Ants forage for a few days but may disappear after a few days to a week if they don’t find any food.

**Solutions:**
- Sponge up ants with soapy water.
- Seal entryways and cracks.
- Remove food sources.

**Moderate-level problem:** Ants continue to invade for more than a week or two. Trails include hundreds of ants.

**Solutions:**
- Make a closer inspection of the home and determine how ants are entering.
- Check again for food sources (especially sweets) that may be attracting ants inside or around the foundation.
- Look for materials outside the house, such as moist mulch or wood debris, that may provide good nesting sites.
- Supplement activities with prepackaged ant baits and gels.
Severe problem: Several hundred to thousands of ants are invading a month or more after sealing your home and removing nesting materials and food sources. Prepackaged baits haven’t worked.

Solutions:
• Install refillable bait dispensers and fill with liquid borate-based bait.
• Continue to remove sweet food sources and seal entryways.

STEP 3: USE BAITS AND BAIT STATIONS

Choice of bait attractant, pesticide active ingredient, and bait dispenser are critical for obtaining good control.
• Argentine ants prefer liquid baits with sweet attractant.
• Liquid borate products with 0.5 to 1.0% concentration active ingredient are most effective; higher concentrations may kill ants before they take the bait back to the colony.
• Most pre-packaged baits contain 5% borate. They can be effective at killing foragers and can control low-level infestations, but are not effective for severe infestations.

How to get the most out of your bait—baits alone won’t control ants
• Remove food sources (sugary foods, pet foods, water sources) that might compete with the bait.
• Don’t spray pesticides around baits or on ant trails leading to them.
• Use baits primarily outdoors.
• Use an IPM program: plug up entryways into homes and reduce nesting sites.
• Remember baits may take a week or more to control ants. Be patient.

Prepackaged baits
• Most common products on the market and easy to use, but not effective against severe infestations
• Include liquids, solids, gels (Argentine ants are more attracted to liquids)
• Stations with 5% or more borate are likely to repel or kill ants before they bring bait back to the colony
• May dry up rapidly and need to be replaced frequently
• Should be placed outdoors, but can be placed indoors if you are unable to find trails outdoors; if used indoors, place where ants enter the home such as in cabinets or along windowsills or doors
• Borate or fipronil gel baits can be used indoors under cabinets or along ant travel ways in cracks or crevices

Refillable bait stations
• Best choice for managing moderate to severe infestations – provide ants with continuous access to bait
• Designs include Ant-No-More bait station, Ant Café, and KM AntPro liquid bait dispenser
• Use liquid baits that contain 1% borate or less, such as Gourmet Liquid Ant Bait.

KM AntPro dispenser:
• Install at least one dispenser on each side of your home.
• Place where walls make an angle, next to structures where ants trail, out of sun, and under shrubs.
• Avoid areas where dispensers may be submerged in water.
• Make sure ants are trailing into the dispenser.
• Check stations regularly by tapping and refill as necessary.
• When ants clear, keep dispensers in place, clean them out, and lock with the security screw until you need them again.
• KM AntPro dispensers and Gourmet Liquid Ant Bait are available on the internet.

See the UC IPM web site for more information about ants and their management. www.ipm.ucdavis.edu

If you decide to hire a pest control company, select a company that practices integrated pest management.