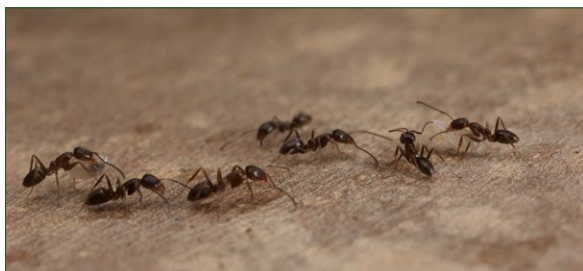


Ants in the Home

Although ants are annoying when they come indoors, they can be beneficial by feeding on fleas, termites, and other pests in the garden.



D-H Choe, UCR

Argentine ants trailing on pavement.

Spraying them with pesticides will not prevent more ants from entering. Most ants live outdoors, so focus on keeping ants from entering buildings. Combine several methods such as caulking entryways, cleaning up food sources, and baiting with pesticides when necessary.

Avoid spraying pyrethroids (like bifenthrin and cypermethrin), especially on hard surfaces such as driveways or sidewalks or around the foundation of buildings. These products pollute waterways.

Make your home less attractive to ants.

- Caulk cracks and openings that provide entry into buildings.
- Store food in clean, sealed containers, not plastic bags or open packaging.
- Clean up crumbs, grease, and spills.
- Fix leaky faucets since they can attract thirsty ants.
- Take out the garbage and indoor food waste bins frequently and clean bins regularly.
- Remove or manage sweet food sources next to your house such as aphid-infested bushes and ripened fruit on trees.
- Keep plants, grass, and mulch at least a foot away from the foundation of buildings to reduce ant foraging and nesting.

For more information about managing pests, visit ipm.ucanr.edu or your local University of California Cooperative Extension office.

When ants invade your home:

- Clean up invading ants with a sponge and soapy water as soon as they enter to remove the scent trail they leave behind.
- Identify where they are entering and plug up with caulk.
- Take infested potted plants outdoors and submerge pots in a solution of insecticidal soap and water.
- Use baits outdoors to control the ant colony. Pesticide sprays only provide temporary control and may not be safe to use indoors.
- If you hire a pest control company, ask them to use baits and spot treatments rather than perimeter treatments or monthly sprays.

How ant baits work:

Ant baits contain insecticides mixed with a food-based attractant that lures worker ants looking for food. The ants take the ant bait back to the nest where the entire colony, including queens, can be killed. The pesticide must be slow acting so workers won't be killed before they get back to the nest.



CA Reynolds, UC IPM

Ant bait stations.

How to use baits:

- Place baits near ant trails and nest openings.
- Prepackaged or refillable bait stations or stakes are the safest and easiest to use. Active ingredients in baits may include boric acid/borate, fipronil, avermectin, or hydramethylnon.
- Liquid borate (0.5-1% borate in sugar water solution) baits in refillable bait stations are best for severe Argentine ant infestations.
- Replace baits when empty. If ants aren't taking the bait, reposition the bait stations, or try a different bait product. It can take 5 to 10 days to see fewer ants.

What you do in your home and landscape affects our water and health.

- Minimize the use of pesticides that pollute our waterways and harm human health.
- Use nonchemical alternatives or less toxic pesticide products whenever possible.
- Read product labels carefully and follow instructions on proper use, storage, and disposal.