

Pest Control of Black Ants

Black ants are commonly found throughout the UK, and although they nest outdoors, they are often found inside houses, where they cause a nuisance rather than a health risk.

Ants mate on the wing, so the "flying ants" that you see in late summer are either males or immature queens.

Where do they come from?

You will find ants nests in dry earth around plant roots, with sandy soil in particular attracting colonies. Nests are increasingly being found inside the walls of properties (cavity walls, for example). Once a colony develops it can be difficult to get rid of.

Why do ants come indoors?

The ants found indoors are usually worker ants, which are foraging for food for the queen and the grubs. They have found that buildings inhabited by humans are a good source of food, particularly sweet or sugary items.

Do black ants just live on human food?

No, the worker ants are scavengers and collect seeds, nectar, even dead insects to take back to the nest. They also prey on greenfly, black fly and other small insects, so they can do the gardener some good.

Do black ants do any harm?

Although it is unpleasant and a nuisance to find a large number of them in your home, black ants do not transmit any serious diseases.

However, you should remember as well that the ants may have travelled through unpleasant or dirty places during their foraging and before entering your home. This means that they can taint any food, making it unsuitable to eat.

Do not leave food uncovered if accessible to ants, but if they have contaminated food, dispose of in the dustbin (wrapped first to prevent it smelling in the warmer weather).

How do I get rid of them?

The cheapest, but not necessarily most successful, way of dealing with an ants' nest is to pour boiling water onto the nest. This will certainly control the problem, but may only be a temporary solution.

Another way of eliminating ants' nests is to buy a household insecticide which you should apply on and around the nest, together with possible entry points for the ants. Entry points would include doors, windows, cracks in walls, even wastepipes. Remember, for your own safety, to follow the manufacturers' instructions on the pack.

This again may only be a short term answer, firstly because of the low dosages allowed in domestic insecticides. Secondly, there can be so many ants in one nest that it is difficult to eradicate the whole colony in one go, so the problem may recur.