



Garden Ants (*Lasius niger*)

What do they look like?

The worker ants are about 3.5 to 5 mm long. Dark brown almost black in colour.

Facts.

- Garden ants are harmless (do not bite or carry diseases and are not regarded as a public health pest).
- They usually make their nests outdoors in lawns, flowerbeds, beneath paving stones and at the base of walls. The increased usage of block paving and flags all set on sand has certainly increased the numbers of ant colonies by providing ideal conditions for them.
- There may be large numbers of individual nests around properties if the soil structure is particularly suited to their requirements
- The season for ants has become more and more extensive and they may now be found from January to late October.
- Worker ants are responsible for providing food for the colony and are often found foraging into houses in search for food. They often feed on food that is sweet and sugary. When one ant finds food, there will soon be others and a trail of worker ants taking the food back to the nest.
- The length of time that an individual nest is active will depend largely on the prevailing conditions (weather, food availability etc.) it will be a period of months. When a nest is reaching its end all the ants grow wings. This changes their appearance and they seem much larger. The reason that this happens is that the ants mate on the wing. The sight of large swarms of flying ants (sometimes inside properties) can be very distressing. Once they have mated the males all die and many of the females but some females will survive and will dig a hole in the soil and hibernate until next season.

How can the Council help?

- Highly trained officers from the Pest Control section can undertake a treatment for you, there is a charge for this service (See the web link for prices).

- The officer undertaking the treatment will decide the best method of treatment, this may be the application of a powder or a residual insecticidal spray or a gel.
- He will advise you of what he has done and what the likely outcome will be, he will leave you a safety sheet providing information about the substance used. (Ant's are a difficult problem to solve and you should not expect instant eradication.
- He may treat certain external surfaces of your property but he will not treat ants in the garden, as this would also kill other species of beneficial insects.

How to contact us

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