

Pavement Ants



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The pavement ant, *Tetramorium caespitum*, is one of the most common ants found around houses. Most people recognize their anthills, often located between sidewalk cracks. Pavement ants usually do not cause any concern until they decide to come into the house for a snack.

Identification

Pavement ant workers are small, 1/8-inch to 3/16-inch long, and blackish brown with light-colored legs and two spines at the end of the thorax. A distinguishing character, visible with a hand lens or microscope, is the series of fine parallel grooves on the head and thorax.

Biology and Habits

Pavement ant colonies can contain from 10,000 to 30,000 ants. They nest outdoors in sidewalk cracks or under driveways, concrete slabs, stones, or mulch. Pavement ants can be troublesome pests in buildings constructed directly on concrete slabs.

At times, large numbers of pavement ants will enter homes in search of food. They

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prefer fatty or greasy foods, but they will feed on sweets and the honeydew from aphids.

Entry points into houses include doorways, cracks, and spaces under siding. The expansion joint along the lower edge of sliding glass doors is a common, but often overlooked, entry point.

Winged pavement ant swarmers generally are seen in the spring and summer. Their emergence sometimes generates concern if they happen to be mistaken for termites.

Prevention Methods

As with many household pests, sanitation is vitally important. Store food in glass or plastic containers with lids that can be tightly sealed. If the ants are feeding on pet food, place the dishes in a shallow moat filled with soapy water. Remove from the

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yard such items as stones, boards, and bricks under which the ants can build nests.



Pavement ant worker

Establishing a vegetation-free zone filled with gravel or decorative stone along

the foundation will often discourage the ants from nesting close to the house. Any mulch used near the house should be no more than 2 inches deep.

Control Strategies

Control of pavement ants is often easier if you can determine their entry point, travel route, and what food they are foraging

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for. Inside the house, pavement ants often travel along baseboards or under the edge of carpet. Simply spraying the baseboard will not provide effective control, but will only

prompt the ants to move their trail to another spot.

Baits are often the best control method for pavement ants. Workers carry the bait back to the nest where it affects their nestmates. A number of baits are available for pavement ant control.

Place the baits along the ants' indoor trails. Check them after a few days to verify that they were placed in the correct locations and that the ants are feeding on the bait. Keep in mind, though, that baits are effective only if there are no food scraps that are more attractive than the bait.

Baits are not effective against winged ant swarmers. Winged ants are reproductive forms, interested more in mating than in feeding. Remove swarmers from indoors with a vacuum cleaner; dispose of the vacuum bag in your outdoor garbage can.

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