

The Garden Ant



Description

- The ant is a social insect, which lives in colonies, or nests, which it constructs itself.
- Ants are normal inhabitants of gardens and outdoor spaces, but can occur in dwellings in large numbers.
- Garden ants are 4mm in length (3/16th of an inch) and are a very dark brown, almost black, colour.



Lifestyle

- During the summer large numbers of both winged females and males are reared in the nest or colony which is usually underground. On one or two warm summer evenings they swarm from the nest entrances and take flight. During this brief flight insects mate and on returning to the ground the males soon die.
- The females shed their wings and crawl back into the colony where they spend the winter in hibernation before starting a new colony the following spring. In favorable conditions the queen ant and her colony may survive for several years.
- When ants invade domestic premises they are attracted to sweet foods such as syrups, jams, preserves and sugars. The ants can be seen making a trail to and from their nest entrance and the food source to transport the food into the colony and so nourish the workers and queen inside.

Significance

There is no real public health significance from garden ants but aesthetically no one likes the thought of eating food upon which insects have crawled. Ants are merely a nuisance when found indoors in large number.

Control Measures

- The only real method of control is to locate the nest or colony by following the trail of ants. The nest can then be treated with an insecticidal dust or spray or a gel which the ants carry into the colony. Likely entrance points to a colony include holes in walls, possibly around drainage and waste pipes, through air bricks, and beneath poorly finished work surfaces and kitchen units, baths and wash basins.
- Unless the nest can be uncovered any treatment of foraging ants will be largely ineffective. Regrettably, if this is not possible for example, because the nest is beneath a concrete or solid floor, it may be impossible to destroy it completely and thus achieve effective eradication of the infestation.

Spelthorne Borough Council does not offer a service for dealing with infestations of garden ants, but we can pass the details to our Pest Control Contractor who can give you a quote. Please contact Spelthorne's Customer Services on 01784 451499 or alternatively e-mail customer.services@spelthorne.gov.uk.