

As their name suggests, these ants usually nest outside somewhere in the garden and frequently they will be found under paving flags or driveways close by to the house.

During spring and summer ants can enter buildings via gaps in brickwork or around door and window frames whilst foraging for food.

They are particularly attracted to sweet foodstuffs including liquids. Once a food source is found it can quickly attract large numbers of worker ants who then take the food back to the nest.

The winged ants frequently seen in the middle of summer are both males and females who come out in swarms and then mate whilst in flight. The smaller males soon die after mating but each of the mated queens is capable of starting a new colony. Her offspring, once developed, become worker ants whose job is to fetch food, keep the colony clean and tend to other developing young ants.

Treatment is always more successful if the nest can first be located by closely observing the ants whilst they are going back and forth when collecting food. Often there are small piles of sand or earth pushed up to the surface near the nest entrance, this can sometimes happen inside buildings around the edges of skirting boards.

If found, the nest entrance should be treated with a residual insecticide, be it an aerosol spray or a powder. Try to insert as much as possible directly into the entrance hole. Additionally, the insecticide should be applied around the internal and external perimeters of the building adjacent to the nest entrance and around door and window frames as they are capable of walking straight up the walls to enter by any gaps around windows, pipes etc.

If the nest is outside under a loose flagstone or similar, boiling water could be carefully used to quickly drench the nest and eggs after first pulling up the flag and exposing the nest. However speed is essential as any delay after raising the stone will allow the ants to quickly disperse whilst taking their eggs with them.

From July onwards the larger winged ants emerge. This can be a particularly disturbing time for householders especially if the nest is located somewhere within the structure of the building, as you could be faced with hundreds of these large ants congregating on walls, windowsills and in corners within the house.

Their emergence usually happens on warm afternoons and evenings and can reoccur several times over a few weeks. These ants are best treated with a flying insect killer spray and then afterwards brushed or vacuumed up. They do not return to the nest like worker ants

Suitable products for treating ants can be purchased from any of the large d.i.y. stores, garden centres, some chemists and ironmongers.

Black garden ants do not bite or carry disease so they are not classed as a Public Health Hazard.

When using insecticides always read the label to make sure it is right for use in your circumstances.