

Lawn Care

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CONTROL OF ANTS

ANTS do not directly harm garden plants or grasses although some species having very strong jaws are able to crack seeds and appropriate them for food. It is the earthen mounds thrown up about the entrance to their nests that make the presence of ants undesirable. Besides being unsightly, the mounds sometimes smother young plants. The galleries or burrows which ants form in the soil disturb root growth by causing undue drying.

While ants do not feed on plants they are garden pests because of their habit of fostering aphids (plant lice). Some species get part of their food from the sweet, sticky excreta of aphids. This is so important to them that they carry the aphid eggs underground in the autumn and protect them over the winter. In the spring they carry the young aphids to a succulent weed host for a food supply, later moving the adult aphids to still other "pasture." It is said that

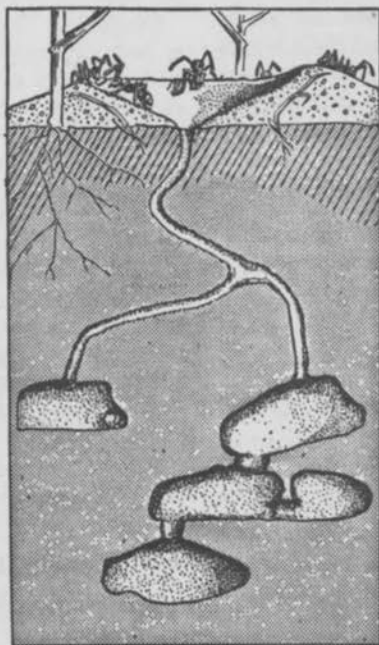
some types of aphids have become so dependent on ant transportation that they have practically lost independent means of locomotion.

While a good deal is known about ants, it may surprise some to learn that there are kings as well as queens in the colony and that in their early life they have wings which they use to emerge from the nest. The males mate and soon die, the females fly to attractive nesting sites, tear off their wings, make nests and lay a few eggs. The queens live 12 to 15 years during which time each lays thousands of eggs.

Control Measures

No control is effective unless the whole colony is destroyed. This can be done by fumigation or by poisonous baits.

A fumigant is probably first choice if the nests can be located. With a screw driver or pointed stick enlarge entrances to nest. Probe to 8 inches to be sure of reaching depth where queen is located. Then



pour into the openings a thimble-full of one of the chemicals that form a heavier-than-air gas which will penetrate the ant galleries and suffocate the colony. Carbon bisulphide is effective. Since it is a liquid a funnel should be employed to get the material deep into the soil. Calcium Cyanide is another gas-forming material. It is also obtainable at most drug stores in a product called Cyanogas, made by the American Cyanamid Company. This is in convenient powder form and a little poured into the opening quickly releases a deadly gas.

After inserting either carbon bisulphide or Cyanogas, close the opening with soil or other covering to seal in the gas. Avoid spilling either material as it will destroy the grass.

Caution. Carbon bisulphide is highly inflammable and explosive. Cyanogas is very poisonous. Keep children and pets away and do not inhale the fumes or open container indoors.

Gasoline may be used as a fumigant but since the fumes are lighter than air, some means must be used to contain the gas underground. The gas will be better contained if a heavy paper covering is used, the edges being sealed with loose soil.

Poison Baits. If the nests are not easily located or if for house use, one of the poison baits may be utilized. These can be made at home but it is quite a little trouble and there is the danger of accident when laymen compound mixtures containing poisons.

It is probably safer and easier to purchase one of the prepared ant killers sold at drug stores. Some of these attract both sweet and grease-eating ants. Usually they have two types of poison baits. One kind lures the ants into a trap from which they cannot escape. Another bait contains a slow acting thallium sulphate poison which is carried back to the nest and fed to

the queen and her young. This is the better poison for outdoor use since it would be difficult to trap enough ants to have much effect on a full colony. Most ant baits dry out rapidly after which they are not effective. Outdoors they should be placed in the shade or they will only last a few hours.

A mixture of one pound of brown sugar and one ounce of paris green is said to be an effective poison that will be carried to the colony. If it is too sticky, a little flour may be added. Here again there is danger of accidental poisoning of pets or children attracted by the sugar.

Another suggestion is to dust Rotonone or Pyrethrum powders around the nest openings.

Dry Soils. The ant problem is apt to be more severe in dry soils, especially gravelly or sandy locations. In extreme cases the number of ant hills may run into the hundreds over small areas. Spot treatment may be out of the question. If so, the brown sugar-paris green 16 to 1 bait may be scattered over the infested area at the rate of ½ lb. per 1,000 sq. ft. The spread should be thin and even and made when the grass is perfectly dry to avoid burning and danger to pets.

One LAWN CARE reader reports success in applying a solution of a can of Chloride of Lime to 5 gallons of water. Another kept flooding the ant nests until they finally got discouraged and moved away.

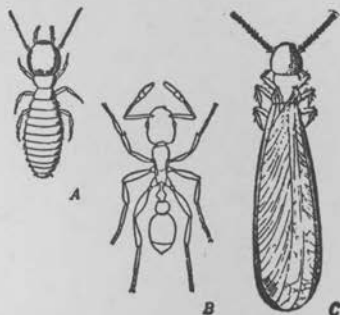
TERMITES

Termites resemble ants and are sometimes mistakenly referred to as flying ants, winged ants or white ants.

At times swarms of these may be seen emerging from nests formed under a lawn. The termites with wings are the true males and females. The soldiers and workers do not have wings. The workers are the destructive

forms which are active in foraging and feeding on wood.

Because their damage is so much to be avoided, it is important that every home owner be able to recognize them. The accompanying illustration may aid in identification. The main difference between wingless termites and ordinary ants is that termites do not have the slender waist, typical of true ants. The wingless termite workers are white and always work under cover.



A, Adult form of termite, the kind that destroy wood; B, a true ant with the slender waist; C, winged form of termite.

If a colony is located it should be promptly destroyed by one of the methods suggested for ants. A search should be made for passageways that lead from the nest to wherever the termites may be working. These should be broken up and the surface over which the passageway has been running, heavily treated with creosote. In extreme cases it is best to consult reliable authorities on the problem.

Dogs Still in the Limelight

Those who love dogs regardless of how they behave, those who love dogs but insist that they should behave, and those who just don't love dogs vied with each other in commenting upon our No. 76 bulletin entitled "Dogs Beware." Feeling ran high. Letters

frequently come in now, after two years, commenting upon this issue and taking side one way or the other. In the midst of the barrage we received, strangely enough, an order for seed for a dog cemetery in Marion. A *LAWN CARE* reader now writes us that *American Mercury* for January 1944 carried a story entitled "Why I Hate Dogs." Our informant says the story is excruciatingly funny and adds this:

"I lived for five years on a 53,000 acre ranch in New Mexico where dogs were both necessary and enjoyable. Last summer when the neighbor's dog buried a large bone in my bed of Foxgloves, on which we had worked so painstakingly, it was not funny at all."

From Massachusetts comes a letter to the effect that a certain lady had a sign on her lawn which read, "Notice to dogs. This land is poisoned." Dogs which could not read were apparently warned by their masters, because the sign, she said, was effective. Those of us who do have a strong attachment for dogs—and the number is legion—might well start a school of manners before it gets too late.

Seeds are transported by clothing to a far greater degree than may be generally imagined. For instance the trouser cuffs of a home gardener who had spent four days in such work at midseason, were found to carry the seeds of 33 kinds of plants, 19 species of grasses and many types of weeds. His socks contained 300 seeds of just one kind of weed—the assela tussock. (And it makes no difference who wears the pants!)