

# Small Honey Ant



## Appearance:

Worker ants are 1/8 inch long and are light to dark brown with the abdomen usually darker. The body is smooth and shiny but has numerous hair-like setae dispersed over it. The thorax is slender, with an uneven profile. The waist (abdominal pedicel) is 1-segmented (one node). This ant has no stinger and is not known to bite.

## Habitat:

Small honey ants nest deep in the soil, in shady, moist areas. Occasionally they may nest under objects such as stones. The nest has a single central opening, surrounded by a somewhat circular crater of characteristic earthen pellets. The nest is typically 18 to 51 inches deep with a single tunnel (spiral-shaped access shaft) from which branch about 6 to 40 lateral chambers. Colonies are small, averaging about 1,580 adults (range 48 to 2,208). The number of queens varies from 1 to 6, often with one. Developmental time (egg to adult) is about 70 to 90 days.

Small honey ants sometimes nest in soil associated with slab expansion joints and occasionally swarm indoors during the winter and early spring months. Small honey ants are very cold tolerant, more so than any other structural-infesting species. Workers forage at night, during cool or cloudy days, and during rains. Foraging starts with temperatures just above freezing and peaks with temperatures of 45 to 70° F. In midsummer, they sometimes aestivate (no activity) for 1 to 2 months during the hottest weather. They prefer high relative humidity when foraging. They readily forage in trails.

## Diet:

Outside, they are extremely fond of honeydew and will tend honeydew-producing insects such as aphids, scale insects, treehoppers, whiteflies and mealy bugs. They feed on live and dead insects, juices of over-ripened fruits, and will extract the sap or juice from flower buds, tender plant shoots, and the germinating seeds of long leaf pines. They commonly forage indoors where they feed on such foods as sweet corn, ketchup, cakes, breads, sugar, honey, syrup, soft drinks, watermelon and other fruits.

## Solutions:

**What you can do:** It is wise to quickly clean up food (including pet food) and beverage spills from floors, countertops, porches and decks to discourage foraging by these ants indoors and near residences/buildings. Food items should be stored in airtight containers, if possible.

Outdoors it is always a good idea to seal potential exterior entry points such as around window and door frames, utility line entrances and missing or cracked mortar joints. Weep holes in brick veneer walls can be stuffed using steel wool or copper gauze. It is important to trim back tree and shrub branches that are in contact with the structure to prevent ants and other pests from bridging.

**Professional Solutions:** As with all pest problems, solutions begin with a thorough inspection. If workers are found inside a structure, a Quik-Kill service technician will follow the trail to where they disappear which is almost always into an exterior wall or slab expansion joint.

Once the foraging trails have been traced, treatment may consist various materials placed into cracks and crevice. An exterior perimeter (barrier) application may also be used for long-term prevention.



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