

Get Rid of Ants

Without Toxic Chemicals

A fact sheet from Toxic Free NC

Ants are social insects and live in colonies. You may think they are just pests, but ants actually eat other pests such as fleas, flies and termites, and some species also aerate the soil and recycle organic matter. There are more than 450 species of ants in the United States!



Some of the most common pest ants in North Carolina are: Argentine Ants – Light or dark brown colored ants that walk in lines and prefer sweet treats. They don't sting and very seldom bite.

Odorous House Ants – Dark reddish brown or black ants that are especially common indoors. They smell like rotten coconuts when you squish them.

Pharaoh Ants - Yellowish or red ants that frequently invade homes.

Red Imported Fire Ants – Reddish colored ants that nest in mounds often found outdoors in places where the soil has been disturbed. Very painful stings!

Prevent ants from coming inside in the first place:

1. **Don't feed the ants!** Ants can easily get into plastic bags or cardboard boxes. Use ant-proof glass or plastic containers with tight-fitting lids to store your food, and your pet food. Glass jars should have a rubber gasket or seal, as ants can climb up the threads of screw-top jars. You can also store dry goods like flour, rice, and sugar in containers in the refrigerator or freezer.
2. **Clean up.** Regularly clean your kitchen floors and cabinets to remove all the crumbs and scraps of food.
3. **Ant-proof your trash.** Make sure that food waste in your garbage doesn't stick around. Rinse empty food containers before you throw them away or recycle them. Don't leave food scraps in the garbage overnight. Take out the trash often.
4. **No way in.** Seal up cracks and crevices that give ants a way in. Use caulk to seal the cracks between walls and floors, around windows and doorframes, and around cupboards and bathroom fixtures. You might also install door sweeps and weather stripping to keep them from slipping in under the doors.

Get rid of ants without toxic chemicals:

1. **Soapy water.** Drown ants marching through your home by wiping them ...
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up with a sponge and dunking them in soapy water. Also, be sure to wipe up the trail they leave behind – that way, their buddies won't be able to find their way inside again.

2. **Pet food barrier.** Ants cannot cross soapy water, so you can create a barrier by putting your pet's food dish in the middle of a bowl of soapy water.
3. **Make your own ant bait out of borax.** Borax is a low-toxicity chemical powder that kills ants, but won't vaporize into gas, and is safe to handle. To make the bait, mix 3 cups of water with 1 cup of sugar and 4 teaspoons of borax cleaner. Divide the mixture between 3 – 6 screw-top glass jars. Loosely pack the jars halfway with cotton balls or other cotton stuffing. Screw the lids on tightly. Then, poke a few holes in the top of the jars, and place them near points of ant entry and along their trails. Boric acid can be irritating if you inhale large amounts of the powder, so be cautious, and wear a mask if you are working with large amounts of it. As with all potentially hazardous materials, store boric acid away from children and pets.
4. **Flood outdoor ant nests.** You can flood them with 2 – 3 gallons of very hot water – it will kill some of the ants, and force the rest to move someplace else. Try adding a little bit of soap to the water, too. You may have to flood the nest more than once. If you are treating fire ants this way, be extremely careful not to get stung! We advise that you mark the location of the nest first with a flag or something else very easy to spot, and warn everyone in your household to stay well away from the flag until the fire ants are gone. Wear shoes and socks rolled over long pants, and leave the area immediately after flooding the nest, as the ants will be angry.