



earth-wise guide to

Fire Ants



Enlarged photo of fire ants

description

Fire ant colonies contain the queen(s), winged males and females, and wingless, sterile female workers and brood who feed and protect the queen.

infestation

Fire ants create mounds up to 18" tall in any type of soil. They prefer open sunny areas such as lawns, pastures, parks and disturbed areas, often nest under side walks, slabs or at the base of trees.

problems

Fire ants don't injure turfgrass but mounds become unsightly; ants are aggressive and cause painful stings that are easily infected. They can invade electrical equipment by chewing insulation and cause short circuits.



Fire ant mound

Least Toxic Solutions

- Properly identify as fire ants — many other species occur in Texas and some are their natural predators; call the Extension office at (512) 854-9600 for details, or visit <http://fireant.tamu.edu>
- Carefully pour a large pot (about 3 gallons) of boiling water on each mound. This will kill a mound about 60% of the time
- Nematodes (*Steinernema carpocapsae*) are small round worms that attack fire ant larvae, as well as grubs and other soil-dwelling larvae. They work best when applied to moist soil at dusk
- Choose baits over contact products; baits are safer to use because they are ant-specific and formulated with very small percentages of the active ingredients
- For less than 5 mounds per 1/4 acre, treat mounds individually
- For more than 5 mounds per 1/4 acre, broadcast ant BAIT products once or twice a year, mid-April – September (fall application reduces spring infestations)
- Apply baits when ants are feeding, (toss a potato chip next to an active mound in the yard and check back in 15 minutes to see if ants are feeding)
- In hot weather, apply in evening when temperatures are cooler
- Use fresh bait—opened containers may last only a few months
- Consider sharing leftover bait with a neighbor before it goes stale
- Avoid application before rain (at least 8 hours)
- DO NOT USE GASOLINE OR DIESEL FUEL TO TREAT
- If you feel you must use a contact pesticide, make the most earth-friendly choice. Avoid using any leftover products in your garage containing chemicals such as diazinon or Dursban (chlorpyrifos). They have been banned by the EPA for residential use
- Use insecticides only where recommended on the product label — for instance, do not use them in the vegetable garden unless specified

Neighborhood Ant-Out!

Organize your neighbors to treat fire ants at the same time—you share the cost of the bait and control the pests rather than driving them from yard to yard.

If you have unwanted or banned chemicals (Dursban or Diazinon) in your garage, please take them for safe disposal to a household hazardous waste facility. In Austin call 974-4343 for information.

product toxicity comparisons*

(not for endorsement purposes)

Toxicity/Threat: ○ low ○ low to moderate ● high ● highest
 N/A not applicable ? unknown toxicity
 ☠ banned for residential use by EPA

Hazards:

human toxicity		aquatic life	birds, bees, pets	soil mobility	environmental persistence
acute	chronic				

Baits

least toxic



most toxic

Eliminator® Fire Ant Killer Bait (<i>spinosad</i>)	○	?	●	○	○	○
Extinguish™ Professional Fire Ant Bait (<i>methoprene</i>)	○	?	●	○	?	○
Amdro® Fire Ant Bait (<i>hydamethylnon</i>)	○	●	●	○	○	○
Spectracide® Fire Ant Bait (<i>pyriproxyfen</i>)	○	?	○	?	?	?
Ascend™ Fire Ant Bait (<i>avermectins/Abamectin B1</i>)	○	?	●	○	○	○
Logic® (<i>fenoxy carb</i>)	○	●	●	○	○	○

Contact

least toxic



most toxic

Boiling Water (use 3 gallons per mound)	non-chemical control					
Flea Destroyer™ Beneficial Nematodes (<i>Steinernema carpocapsae</i>)	non-chemical control					
Victor® Ant Killer (<i>mint oil</i>)	?	○	?	?	?	?
Citrex™ Fire Ant Killer (<i>d-limonene</i>)	●	?	○	○	○	○
Organic Solutions™ MultiPurpose Fire Ant Killer (<i>silicon dioxide, pyrethrins, piperonyl butoxide</i>)	○	●	●	○	○	○
Ortho® Fire Ant Killer (<i>acephate</i>)	○	●	○	●	○	○
Ortho® Fire Ant Killer Granules 2 (<i>bifenthrin</i>)	○	?	●	○	○	○
Green Light® Fire Ant Killer (<i>permethrin</i>)	○	●	●	○	○	○
Enchem's™ Rapid Kill Fire Ant Mound Drench (<i>fenvalerate/Pydrin</i>)	○	?	●	○	○	○
Ortho® Fire Ant Killer Granules (<i>diazinon</i>)	○	?	●	●	○	○
Hi-Yield® Ant Killer Granules (<i>diazinon</i>)	○	?	●	●	○	○

*Texas Cooperative Extension and the City of Austin provide this information as a comparative reference only. Listing of specific product trade names does not constitute an endorsement of its use. Many other pesticides and pesticide products are available and may be suitable for use other than those listed in these tables.

why grow green?

The Grow Green program educates Austin area residents on the LEAST TOXIC approach to pest management and responsible fertilizer use. Our goal is to reduce the amount of landscape chemicals that "runoff" into our waterways or leach into our groundwater and degrade water quality.

Grow Green is a partnership between the Texas Cooperative Extension and the City of Austin Watershed Protection and Development Review Department. For more information visit our website at www.growgreen.org.

Products rated by the Washington Toxics Coalition. Contact Philip Dickey at 206-632-1545 for rating information, or see the Grow Green Products fact sheet.



**Watershed Protection
Development Review**

<http://www.cityofaustin.org/watershed/>



Texas Cooperative
EXTENSION

The Texas A&M University System

<http://texasextension.tamu.edu/>

Grow Green encourages least toxic solutions

www.growgreen.org