



earth-wise guide to



Fire Ants



Enlarged photo of fire ants

description

Fire ant colonies contain the queen(s), winged males and females, workers (wingless, sterile females) and brood (eggs, larvae and pupae).

infestation

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

problems

Fire ants can be a problem year round but are most prevalent in the spring and fall. Fire ants don't injure turfgrass but mounds become unsightly; ants are aggressive and cause painful stings that may become infected. They can invade electrical equipment and cause short circuits.



Fire ant mound

Least Toxic Solutions

- Before treating, properly identify pest as fire ants - many other species of ants occur in Texas and some are predators of fire ants; 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; this works best after a rain
- Introduce nematodes (*Steinernema carpocapsae*), the small round worms that attack fire ant larvae, grubs, and other soil-dwelling larvae. They work best when applied to moist soil at dusk

If you must use a pesticide...

- 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 five fire ant mounds per 1/4 acre, treat mounds individually
- For more than five mounds per 1/4 acre, spread ant BAIT products over the entire lawn once or twice a year, mid-April and September (fall application reduces spring infestations)
- Apply baits when ants are foraging (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 baits in evening when temperatures are cooler
- Use fresh bait—opened containers may last only a few months
- Share excess bait with a neighbor before it goes stale; it can help lengthen the time between infestations
- Avoid application before rain (at least 8 hours)
- Use insecticides only where recommended on the product label — for instance, do not use them in the vegetable garden unless specified
- Make sure to apply the proper amount of bait (many baits are applied 1-1.5 pounds per acre) and use a hand-held spreader set on the lowest setting. Walk in a criss-cross pattern for good coverage of the whole area
- DO NOT USE GASOLINE OR DIESEL FUEL TO TREAT MOUNDS

If you must use a pesticide...

- Use the least toxic pesticide first
- Read and follow label directions

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. Call (512) 854-9600 for information.

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 (512) 974-4343 for information.

product toxicity comparisons

Evaluation of active ingredients only; does not include toxicity information on inert or "other" ingredients.

Toxicity/Threat:

low
 low to moderate
 high
 highest
 NA not applicable
 earth-wise
 banned by EPA
 ? unknown toxicity

Hazards:



note Product Name active ingredient(s) / concentrations human toxicity acute chronic aquatic life birds, bees, pets soil mobility environmental persistence

Fire Ant Baits

least toxic	Spectracide® Fire Ant Killer Plus Preventer Bait Once & Done!™	Indoxacarb 0.016%		?			?	?	
	most toxic	Fertiliome® Come and Get It! Fire Ant Killer	Spinosad 0.015%		?				
		Amdro® Fire Ant Bait	Hydramethylnon 0.73%						
		Amdro® Fire Strike™ Fire Ant Bait	Hydramethylnon 0.036% Methoprene 0.0172%						

Mound Treatment

most toxic	Safer™ Fire Ant Killer	D-limonene 78.2%		?				
	Spectracide® Fire Ant Killer Granules Mound Destroyer™	Lambda-cyhalothrin 0.04%						
	Amdro® Quick Kill Fire Ant Mound Drench	Zeta-Cypermethrin 0.35%						
	Bayer Advanced™ PowerForce® Multi-Insect Killer Concentrate	Cyfluthrin 0.75%		?				
	Bayer Advanced™ Fire Ant Killer Ready-to-Use Dust	Beta-cyfluthrin 0.5%		?				
	Ortho® Orthene® Fire Ant Killer	Acephate 50%						
	Eliminator® Fire Ant Killer Dust	Deltamethrin .05%						
	Spectracide® Fire Ant Killer Ready-to-Use Dust	Permethrin 0.25%						

Broadcast Granular

least toxic	Garden Tech® Over'n Out!™ Fire Ant Killer Granules	Fipronil 0.0103%							
	most toxic	Ortho® Max® Fire Ant Killer Broadcast Granules	Bifenthrin 0.1%		?				
		Scotts® Bonus® S Max Southern Weed and Feed & Fire Ant Killer	Bifenthrin 0.110%, Atrazine 1.089%						

The City of Austin and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service provide this information as a comparative reference only. Listing of specific product trade names does not constitute 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. **Check labels carefully as trade names and active ingredients may change.**

Products rated by Grady J. Glenn, Ph.D., B.C.E., of the Pesticide Safety Education Program, Texas AgriLife Extension Service. The rating system was developed by Philip Dickey of the Washington Toxics Coalition.

why grow green?

The Grow Green program is based on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles that encourage the LEAST TOXIC approach to pesticide and fertilizer use. The goal is to reduce the amount of landscape chemicals that degrade water quality when they run off into waterways or leach into our groundwater.

Grow Green is a partnership between the City of Austin Watershed Protection Department and Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Call 512-974-2550 or 512-854-9600 for more information or visit our website at www.growgreen.org

