



Ants – on the bright side



(Above) White footed house ants meticulously tending their young

Ants can be good – but when is the last time you heard that? Sadly, ants are much maligned and misunderstood.

The diversity of the total ant species in an ecosystem can be an indicator of overall environmental health. Having a diverse community of ants and other insects helps keep the entire ecosystem in balance, which is important for all the plants, fungi, and animals (including us) that share the environment.

Ants are important components of an ecosystem for several reasons. They disperse seeds for propagation and their tunneling skills make them important in nutrient cycling and soil aeration. They prey on pest insects such as flies, termites and cockroaches, but are also a food source for many other animals.

There are more than 2000 ant species in Australia, but less than a dozen of these are commonly considered pests. The majority of ant complaints received by DPIRD concern mainly three species - coastal brown ants, odorous garden ants and white footed house ants.

Ants are social insects, existing in perfect communal harmony. More than 95% of ants exist underground with their queen, and we never see them. Ants are in fact so numerous, that if all the ants on the planet were gathered up and weighed, they'd outweigh all the humans put together.

But what happens if your ants are one of the exotic pest species and are overstaying their welcome? Don't feel too bad about controlling them! They are usually not friends of the native ant fauna, often displacing them and then building up in high numbers to the detriment of the entire local environment.

Control when needed

As different ants require different control methods, we suggest sending in ants for identification. This also helps us screen for exotic pests. We have a fantastic webpage called '*Ant identification, the key to successful control*' (Google it!) or phone our Pest and Disease Information Service (PaDIS) for advice regarding sample submission on (08) 9368 3080.

Report suspect pests



MyPestGuide™ Reporter
via app or online
mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au



Pest and Disease Information Service
(08) 9368 3080
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