



Kimberly Schofield
Program Specialist-Urban IPM
k-engler@tamu.edu

Attack of the Crazy Ant (*Paratrechina* sp.)

Emergence and sightings of the crazy ant has heightened awareness of this potentially irritating pest in North Texas. The crazy ant is an introduced ant species from Africa or Asia that has now established itself in many cities from Florida to Texas. Crazy ants are distinctive due to their random and rapid movement. Worker ants are 1/16 to 1/8 inches in length, dark brown to black in color, and have very long legs. Also their antennae are very long, with the first of the 12 segments being twice the length of their heads.

The crazy ant does not have a stinger, but it does bite and it has coarse grayish-white hairs that contain formic acid. The ant will curve its abdomen forward to release the formic acid into predators and prey.

Colonies contain around 2000 workers, with 8 to 40 queens. These colonies are very mobile, so they will move if disturbed. The ants will nest in a variety of locations from dry to moist environments. A crazy ant colony can be located by watching workers carry food back to their nest. The nests can be found in trash, refuse, plants and trees, and rotten wood. Sometimes these ants nest indoors and feed on many household foods.

Crazy ants feed on such items as seeds, honeydew, fruits, household food, and insects. Crazy ants are predators, so they can attack large insects and some other small animals. If they are found indoors, workers can feed on such items as meats, grease, sweets, fruits, and vegetables.

Control Options: These ants are sometimes difficult to control since they are very mobile and can forage long distances from their nests. Therefore **ALL** colonies and satellite colonies must be located and treated.

Some Non-Chemical Control Options:

- 1) Practice good housekeeping by placing open food items in sealed containers and cleaning spilled items.
- 2) Trim tree branches and shrubs to eliminate contact with the structure.
- 3) Seal cracks with caulk and weather-stripping to prevent entry.

Some Chemical Control Options:

- 1) Outdoor colonies can be treated with dusts, residual sprays, baits and granular insecticides.
- 2) Indoor colonies can be treated with residual sprays as spot treatments, dusts, and baits.



Crazy ant worker. Photo by: Bart Drees, Professor and Extension Entomologist, Texas A&M University.



Crazy ant worker. Photo by: Department of Urban and Structural Entomology, Texas A&M University.

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