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A Desirable Ant in Our Landscape?

Yes, this IS true! There are many desirable ants in our landscape; in fact many are able to compete with red imported fire ants. One of these competitor ants is the little black ant, *Monomorium minimum*. This ant is small, about 1/16 inches in length and shiny black in color. All of the workers are the same size. They do not bite or sting, since its stinger is so small.

The little black ant is native to the United States and can be found throughout the country. It prefers to nest under stones/rocks, in rotting logs, in lawns, or in open areas. Nests look like small craters of fine soil. Colonies are moderately sized to large, containing up to 2,000 workers and many queens. They will feed on honeydew, plant secretions, and are predaceous on other insects.

Little black ants will form foraging trails along edges of structures and along sidewalks. This close contact with foundations causes them to sometimes enter structures. Indoors they will feed on grease, oil, meats, sweets, fruits and vegetables. They will commonly nest indoors under the edge of carpeting, in old termite galleries or in wall voids.

Some Control Options

Non-Chemical Controls:

Seal all cracks and crevices on exterior of structure, so ants will have less opportunity to invade indoors. In addition, water sources should be reduced by fixing leaks and replacing rotting wood. Also all debris should be removed from around the structure so there are less potential nesting sites around buildings. Tree branches should be trimmed, so they do not touch buildings.

Chemical Controls:

Remember that these ants are competitors with fire ants. If they are an extreme nuisance then control should be taken. Baits can be used to control these ants and should be positioned where ant trails are seen. Sweet baits are usually the most effective, but if acceptance is low, a protein bait should be used. Also liquid sprays can be applied along foundations or around windows to kill nests outdoors before they invade indoors.



Little black ants attacking red imported fire ant queen. Photo by: Dr. Bart Drees, Professor and Extension Entomologist, Texas A&M University.

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