

CONTROLLING

ANTS

IN YOUR HOME

CONTROL ANTS IN YOUR HOME WITH THESE ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS

Bait stations containing borates or hydramethylnon	Amdro Kills Ants Ant Killer, Amdro Kills Ants Ant Killing Bait, Combat Source Kill 4 products, KM Ant Pro products, Maggie's Farm Simply Effective No Spill Ant Kill, Terro Ant Killer II Liquid Ant Baits
Diatomaceous earth (DE) products	Concern Diatomaceous Earth Crawling Insect Killer, Safer Brand Diatomaceous Earth Ant and Crawling Insect Killer, St. Gabriel Organics Insect Dust—Diatomaceous Earth
Applicator for diatomaceous earth (DE)	Pest Pistol
Plant-based insecticides	EcoLogic Ant and Roach Killer, Ecosmart Ant and Roach Killer, Orange Guard
Hose attachment	Bug Blaster
Sticky barrier	Stikem Special pest glue, Tree Tanglefoot Insect Barrier

Argentine ants are frequent invaders in California homes. They are tiny (1/8 inch). They come inside a few at a time at first (the scouts), and then in long lines, following scent trails to a food source.

A QUICK FIX FOR AN ANT EMERGENCY

If you deal with ants when they first come inside, a few simple steps can take care of the problem.

1. Find what ants are after (usually leftover food) and where they are entering the room (usually through a crack in the wall). Mark the spot so you can find it again. If you can't find an entry point, see Step 4.
2. Spray lines of ants with soapy water and wipe up with a sponge, and clean up any food or spills.
3. Next, block entry points temporarily with a smear of petroleum jelly or a piece of tape.
4. If you can't find an entry point, clean up the ants (Step 2). Place a bait station in an out-of-the-way spot on the line the ants have been following. Remember to remove the bait station when the line of ants has disappeared so you don't attract more ants into the house. (See *Tips for Using Ant Baits.*)

While they can be pests, ants are helpful creatures, especially outside. Ants kill and eat many pest insects, help to aerate soil, and recycle animal and vegetable material. This is good news, because it's probably not possible to eliminate ants from their outdoor habitat. The best way to manage an ant invasion is to keep them outside.

KEEP ANTS AWAY

- Store food in the refrigerator, or in containers that seal tightly.
- Keep things clean and dry, and fix leaking faucets and pipes (ants come in to find water as well as food).
- Weather-strip doors and windows.



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- Put pet dishes in a soapy moat—partially fill a wide, shallow container with soapy water and place pet bowls in the water.
- Use silicone caulk to permanently close holes in walls, cracks along moldings and baseboards, and gaps around pipes and ducts to keep ants outside.
- Use a hand duster, such as Pest Pistol, to apply desiccating dust such as diatomaceous earth (DE) in wall openings and cracks before sealing. DE kills insects by absorbing their outer waxy coating, causing dehydration and death. It has little toxicity to humans or pets but inhaling it can cause respiratory problems, so wear a dust mask and goggles when applying. Be sure to buy food-grade DE, not DE for pool filters.



OUTDOORS

- Follow indoor ant trails back to the spot where ants come in from outside, and place enclosed bait stations there.
- Caulk cracks where ants are entering the house.
- Ants are attracted to the sweet, sticky honeydew made by aphids, whiteflies, and scale insects. Use sticky barriers around the trunk of a tree or bush to keep ants away while you deal with the source of the honeydew. Prune any branches that touch walls, fences, or the ground so ants cannot get around the barrier.



ANTS IN YOUR PLANTS?

If ants are nesting in a potted houseplant, move it outdoors. Water it thoroughly and place the pot in a bucket filled with water that comes an inch below the rim of the pot. Use a stick to make a bridge for ants to get out of the pot and the bucket without getting in the water. The ants will soon begin carrying their white-colored young to safety. When no more ants emerge, drain the pot and return it to the house.

TIPS FOR USING ANT BAITS

Baits use a minimum of insecticide and confine it to a very small area. Ants carry small quantities of bait back to the nest to share, which can reduce the local ant population.

- Use baits with active ingredients borate or hydramethylnon. Bait stations with hydramethylnon should be enclosed.
- Argentine ants change their food preferences frequently. If one bait is not working, try another type. Wait at least a day to see if ants take the bait.
- Do not spray insecticide around the bait; it will repel the ants.
- Baits may take several weeks to kill the ants. At first you may see more ants coming to the bait, but after a few days to a week you should see many fewer ants.
- When ants are gone, remove the bait so you don't attract more ants. Return enclosed bait stations to the original box to save and use again. Put the box inside a plastic bag, seal it with a twist-tie, and store away from children and pets.



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Common home and garden pesticides are found in stormwater runoff, treated wastewater, and in local waterways, sometimes at levels that can harm sensitive aquatic life. **Our Water Our World** is a joint effort by water pollution prevention agencies, participating retail stores, and pesticide distributors and manufacturers—working together to reduce the risks associated with pesticide use.

Our Water Our World fact sheets and store displays educate residents about less-toxic pest management. For the rest of the series of fact sheets, visit www.OurWaterOurWorld.org. Look for the *Less Toxic • Eco-friendly* tag next to less-toxic products in participating stores and nurseries. See the *Pesticides and Water Pollution* fact sheet for information on active ingredients in common pesticides that may cause water quality problems.

Pest control strategies and methods described in this publication are consistent with integrated pest management (IPM) concepts, and are based on scientific studies and tests in actual home and garden settings. Use suggested products according to label directions and dispose of unwanted or leftover pesticides at a household hazardous waste collection facility or event. For more information on pesticide disposal, visit www.earth911.com. No endorsement of specific brand name products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not mentioned.

For more information, contact:

Bio-Integral Resource Center (BIRC), 510.524.2567, www.birc.org
 University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners in your area
 University of California IPM website, www.ipm.ucdavis.edu