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Download Article Enjoy the outdoors again with these natural and chemical-based ant solutions Download Article Living with a yard full of anthills feels a lot like navigating an obstacle course, where you have to run and hop across stinging lines of ants and their unsightly nests just to get back inside. Taking back your lawn might seem like a chore, but there are lots of easy and effective ways to get rid of ants outside for good. In this article, we've compiled the ultimate list of ways to kill an ant colony at its source. We've also included tips for repelling ants and preventing them from making your yard their home. If you're ready to get rid of your ant infestation for good, read on! Spray a non-repellent pesticide spray onto the anthill to kill the ant colony. Spread a granular pesticide across your lawn. The ants think the pesticide is food and take it back to the nest where it kills the colony. Mix 1 to 2 teaspoons (4.9 to 9.9 mL) of mild liquid dish soap with 1 gallon (3.8 L) of hot water and pour it into the anthill's opening. For another natural solution, pour 3 tbsp (44 ml) of boric acid, 1 cup (201 g) of sugar, and 3 cups (710 ml) of warm water into lids. Set them where you see ants. 1 Spray a non-repellent spray on the nest to kill ants at the source. Mix 0.8 fluid ounces (24 mL) of the pesticide per 1 gallon (3.8 L) of water in a pump sprayer and cover each anthill in your yard. The pesticide kills most ants within 1 week. Non-repellent pesticides create a barrier that ants pass through so that they bring the poison back to the nest.[1] Always follow the specific directions for the pesticide you're using. These are typically printed on a label on the container. Pay attention to where ants are coming from in your yard. They might be near your house, along a fence, or in the cracks of your pavement. Look for small mounds of dirt to find the ant nests. Limit spreading pesticides to every 6 months. Using too much pesticide at a time can be harmful to your health. 2 Apply the pesticide around your home to stop ants from coming inside. Add a non-repellent pesticide to a garden sprayer. Hold the tip of the garden sprayer 6 inches (15 cm) above the ground and spray around your home's perimeter and 1 foot (0.30 m) up onto your foundation. Spray around wire boxes, pipe connections, and any other areas you notice ants entering and exiting your home.[2] Spray around windows and door frames as well. Apply the pesticides on a day when it isn't windy so they do not blow away from the area you're targeting. Advertisement 3 Spread granular pesticide across your lawn for larger infestations. Granular pesticides contain poison that ants carry deep into their nest, thinking that it's food. Pour the bag of granular pesticide into a garden spreader and walk it across your lawn. The spreader throws the pesticide across your lawn for maximum coverage. Then, lightly water your lawn to wet the granules.[3] Some bags of granular pesticides have built-in shakers that allow you to spread them in concentrated areas or around the perimeter of your home. Keep pets and children inside for at least 1 hour to let the pesticide dry.[4] Mow your lawn right before you spread the pesticide so it reaches the ground. 4 Place bait traps near your home for hands-off pest control. Set the bait traps where you notice ants entering or exiting your home. Bait traps have granules that attract ants and contain poison that kills them as it's digested. Dispose of your old traps after 1 month.[5] Some bait traps contain liquid that attracts ants and traps them inside. It often takes several weeks for bait traps to work and kill the ant colony. Find bait traps at your local home and garden store. Advertisement 1 Pour soapy water into the anthill to target the entire colony. Mix 1 to 2 teaspoons (4.9 to 9.9 mL) of mild liquid dish soap with 1 gallon (3.8 L) of hot water. Rake back the anthill to expose the main opening. Then, slowly pour the water into the hole of the ant nest. The hot water along with the soap kills the ants and prevents them from escaping their nest.[6] Pour the solution into a spray bottle for a more controlled method of dispersing the water. Use it to kill stray ants you see in your yard and home. Pour the water into the nest in the early morning or late at night when most of the ants are inside. Boiling the water is often a more effective way to kill the ants. Just use caution when pouring it around grass and plants, as it can damage or kill them. 2 Make homemade bait with boric acid to kill the ants within a few days. Add 3 tablespoons (44 ml) of boric acid and 1 cup (201 g) of sugar to 3 cups (710 ml) of warm water; either diluted liquid boric acid or a powdered boric acid works well. This creates a sweet, poisonous mixture that attracts the ants to take the bait. Pour the mixture into shallow containers or lids and place them along trails or wherever you see ants. The ants bring the bait to the anthill to share, which in turn kills the colony.[7] Keep the bait stations away from your children and pets. Boric acid is toxic to humans and animals if ingested, inhaled, or absorbed through the skin. Never use it in an area where you prepare food, and wear gloves and a face mask to protect yourself while using it. If you spill any boric acid, wipe it up immediately. 3 Sprinkle diatomaceous earth around the anthill to dry out the infestation. Use horticultural diatomaceous earth (DE) so it doesn't kill your plants. Spread the DE around the ant nest as well as any trails you see in your yard. For preventative measures, sprinkle it around the perimeter of your house to keep ants outside. Diatomaceous earth dries the liquids inside the ants and kills them within a few days or weeks. Wear a dust mask so you don't inhale the DE while you spread it. DE is safe to keep in your yard around children and pets. 4 Pour white school glue directly into the anthill to plug up the opening. Use a rake to clear the top of the ant hill and expose the main opening. Then, squeeze a bottle of white school glue into the nest to clog the hole and fill the nest. The glue kills the ants that get stuck inside and pushes any surviving ants to a new nest.[8] 5 Make a repellent spray with orange peels and vinegar to steer ants away. Mix equal parts water and vinegar in a pot and drop in 2 to 3 orange peels. Bring the mixture to a boil on the stove, then turn the heat off. Let the orange peels steep in the water overnight before transferring the mixture to a spray bottle. Shake the bottle to mix the solution. Then, spray the mixture along your driveway, patio, doors, windows, and directly onto the nest to keep the ants away.[9] This method drives ants away rather than killing them. Use a blender to combine the orange peel with the water and vinegar to make a thicker solution that can kill some ants on contact. 6 Sprinkle baby powder around the nest and along trails to repel ants. Ants tend to steer clear of talc products, especially ones like baby powder that have a powerful scent. Spread the baby powder around the nests and use a funnel to pour it directly inside. Then, spread it where you see ant trails and across entry points to create a barrier against the ants.[10] Use baby powder around the perimeter of your house to keep ants out. Chalk, baking soda, petroleum jelly, and cinnamon are other effective substances that repel ants. 7 Rub essential oils on any points of entry to keep ants out. Essential oils like peppermint, cedar, eucalyptus, clove, and citrus help prevent more ants from coming inside. Simply soak a cotton ball in the oil of your choice and apply it around areas where ants enter your home. Repeat the process every 3 days until you don't notice ants anymore.[11] Or, use essential oils to make a spray that kills ants. Dilute 15 drops of an essential oil in 1⁄2 cup (120 ml) of water in a spray bottle. Then, apply the solution directly onto any stray ants you see. Advertisement 1 Remove leaves, yard clippings, and tree branches from your lawn. Ants like to nest in yard debris, so they're often attracted to piles of leaves and debris left in your backyard. Get rid of your lawn clippings by placing them in a yard waste bin for recycling, or compost them in a covered compost bin.[12] 2 Clean up food spills and don't leave any food outside. Ants are attracted to any crumbs and spills you make. So, make sure to take in your food when you're done eating and wipe up any messes as soon as they happen. If you feed your animals outside, rinse and take their food bowls back inside when they're finished eating. Be sure to store any pet food and birdseed in air-tight containers, too.[13] Throw away your garbage in tightly sealed bags to keep your garbage bin as clean as possible. Rinse off food scraps before you place cans and packages in the recycling, too. Removing an ant's food source often makes any bait you set out more attractive, which can kill them more quickly. 3 Store wood off the ground and away from your house. Some types of ants, like carpenter ants, like to make their nests around wood. Make sure any lumber is as far away from your house's foundation as possible to discourage ants from making their way into your yard and home. If you have space, store wood in your garage or a covered shed.[14] 4 Fix water leaks and holes around your house. Leaks often attract ants, while holes in your walls and foundation let them inside. Apply epoxy putty to quickly seal leaking pipes and faucets outdoors. If you see any cracks or holes around your foundation or walls, fill them with caulk.[15] Like all animals, ants need water to survive. So, outdoor leaks often make your yard a more suitable environment for ants. 5 Trim back trees and shrubs that touch your house. Long branches give ants an easy and direct path right into your home. If you have bushes and shrubs planted against your house, prune them back to put distance between you and any ants. Look for any tree branches that extend towards your house and trim them off, too.[16] Advertisement Add New Question Question What is the best ant killer for outside? Kevin Carrillo Pest Control Specialist, MMPC Kevin Carrillo is a Pest Control Specialist and the Senior Project Manager for MMPC, a pest control service and certified Minority-owned Business Enterprise (MBE) based in the New York City area. MMPC is certified by the industry's leading codes and practices, including the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), QualityPro, GreenPro, and The New York Pest Management Association (NYPMA). MMPC's work has been featured in CNN, NPR, and ABC News. Match the pesticide you use to the species of ant. There are 25 species of ants in the US, and one pesticide won't work best for all of them. Get a good look at one of the ants and do a quick Google search to see what it is. If you can't figure it out, you might want to try getting a professional exterminator to come out to get the job done. Question What can I spray for ants outside? Kevin Carrillo Pest Control Specialist, MMPC Kevin Carrillo is a Pest Control Specialist and the Senior Project Manager for MMPC, a pest control service and certified Minority-owned Business Enterprise (MBE) based in the New York City area. MMPC is certified by the industry's leading codes and practices, including the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), QualityPro, GreenPro, and The New York Pest Management Association (NYPMA). MMPC's work has been featured in CNN, NPR, and ABC News. Look for a sugar-based pesticide to deal easily with an entire colony. The best ant baits are made out of sugars, which ants are attracted to and feed on. Some common brands to look for are Terro, MaxForce, Grants Kills Ants, and Drax. Question How do you get rid of ants? Kevin Carrillo Pest Control Specialist, MMPC Kevin Carrillo is a Pest Control Specialist and the Senior Project Manager for MMPC, a pest control service and certified Minority-owned Business Enterprise (MBE) based in the New York City area. MMPC is certified by the industry's leading codes and practices, including the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), QualityPro, GreenPro, and The New York Pest Management Association (NYPMA). MMPC's work has been featured in CNN, NPR, and ABC News. To get rid of ants, you need to find and eradicate the nest. The problem with ants is that there are usually several hundred or several thousand more of them than what you're seeing. After you take care of any visible clusters of ants, make sure to apply your pesticide in other places around the area and near any entrances to your home in order to repel and kill any others that managed to survive. Ask a Question Advertisement Thanks Thanks Advertisement Co-authored by: Pest Control Specialist, MMPC This article was co-authored by Kevin Carrillo and by wikiHow staff writer, Devin McSween. Kevin Carrillo is a Pest Control Specialist and the Senior Project Manager for MMPC, a pest control service and certified Minority-owned Business Enterprise (MBE) based in the New York City area. MMPC is certified by the industry's leading codes and practices, including the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), QualityPro, GreenPro, and The New York Pest Management Association (NYPMA). MMPC's work has been featured in CNN, NPR, and ABC News. This article has been viewed 955,304 times. Co-authors: 18 Updated: April 1, 2025 Views: 955,304 Categories: Featured Articles | Ant and Termite Control Print Send fan mail to authors Thanks to all authors for creating a page that has been read 955,304 times. "I have used vinegar for the inside of my house. So far this solution has been a success. I wipe down the entire area with warm water and simply spray the vinegar on the area and let it dry. So far so good, I haven't noticed any of those worrisome critters inside my house. "..." more Share your story It is not exactly unusual to have ants, or even an ants' nest, in your yard. In fact, ants perform multiple beneficial functions in the garden. That said, there are some legitimate reasons to eradicate an ants' nest, particularly if you have a problem with aphids or similar pests. We lay out half-a-dozen methods, from plain old water to highly-technical nematode release. So you have an ants' nest in your garden. Before you go ballistic and take out the heavy artillery, let's take a minute or two to evaluate whether the ants are an actual problem and need to be taken care of, and, if so, choose a solution that fits the scale of the problem and will do no or minimal collateral damage. Ants in the yard are, well, normal. That doesn't mean you have to have them in your garden if you don't want to, it's just to get across that there's nothing particularly unusual about having ants in your garden. You may be concerned because you know about an ants' nest in your garden. But many, many homeowners have ants' nests in their respective gardens – but they don't even know about the problem and so the 'problem' is not a problem. So where an ants' nest is concerned, perhaps ignorance is bliss. If you know you have an ants' nest in your garden, we'd recommend you only get rid of it if you also know that the ants are damaging your garden. The purpose of this article is not to elaborate upon the benefits that ants can and do bring in the garden. However, so that you can make a fully informed decision as to that ants' nest, before we proceed to outline the ways to get rid of it, a concise outline as to the beneficial effects of these tiny insects. Ants, as such and under normal circumstances, are not garden pests. For the most part they are teeny-weeny 'garden hands'. To begin with, they are natural-born tillers of the soil. Their incessant subterranean activity results in particulate matter from the surface being pulled underneath, deep down, and vice versa, improving the fertility of the soil.1Farji-Brener, A. G., & Werenkaut, V. (2017). The effects of ant nests on soil fertility and plant performance: a meta-analysis. Journal of Animal Ecology, 86(4), 866–877. Also, their tunnelling into and through the soil aerates it which assists in the decomposition of organic matter – dry leaves and dead earthworms alike. Though ants are scavengers in the main, many UK species are also predators. Many, if not most, species of ants actually control or reduce the population of garden pests because they prey on their larvae and eggs.2Ye, Y. (2019, March 12). Ant larvae defend their homes by eating eggs laid by intruders. New Scientist. Retrieved June 3, 2023, from Ants are territorial insects so as long as your garden has one ant colony you won't be getting another one unless an invading troop attacks and defeats the resident ants.3Hölldobler, B., & Lumsden, C. J. (1980). Territorial Strategies in Ants. Science, 210(4471), 732–739. On the other hand, if you destroy or 'evict' your garden's resident ants, then sooner or later advance scouts or a roaming ant colony will come upon your yard, see it as virgin territory ripe for occupation, and lay down stakes! Also keep in mind that ants play a part in a healthy garden ecosystem. While they prey on various small garden pests, they themselves are preyed upon by small birds, fish and other insects. Getting rid of an entire ant colony can throw that healthy garden ecosystem out of whack. Believe it or not, there are yet more reasons to tolerate an ants' nest in the yard but, like we said, this article is not about the positives of ants in the garden! "I have never had to eliminate an ants nest as a horticulturist," shares Master Horticulturist Colin Skelly. "Nests would rarely be large enough to cause a problem in the garden in the UK context. "The only time I have removed an ants nest would be when they have become a problem in the built environment, particularly entering kitchen spaces to take advantage of a supply of crumbs, sugar, etc." So why, under what circumstances, would it be the right decision to get rid of an ants' nest? First – are the ants ruining your landscaping and depositing piles of soil on the lawn? Is the ants' nest tucked away by the fence or is it an eyesore? Is it getting bigger and bigger? If the answers are 'Yes,' the affirmatives answer the bigger question too. Second – if the ants' nest is near shrubs and plants that have delicate roots or those that are wilting without any discernible reason, then the ants' nest may have to go. Though subsoil ant activity is a good thing in general, when it is below or beside delicate roots, it can disturb them and affect their uptake of soil nutrients. Third – does your garden have an aphid problem that you can't get under control? Or a mealybug or whitefly problem? If yes, then you may need to get rid of the ants' nest. That's because ants and aphids often work together; they have a symbiotic relationship. Just as supply ships victual the Navy while being protected by destroyers, so do aphids provide food to ants, and in turn are protected by them. The same goes for mealybugs and whiteflies. Concisely, aphids, mealybugs and whiteflies as honeydew-producing garden pests are of value to ants because these pests provide sustenance to ants: ants gather the honeydew that these pests secrete and take it to their nest, mainly for the queen but also for the colony.4Farmer ants and their aphid herds. (n.d.). McGill Office for Science and Society. Retrieved June 3, 2023, from This means that if you release ladybirds or lacewings to destroy aphids, mealybugs or whiteflies, your efforts may come to naught because the ants will protect the garden pests (as they are well known to do). If you make the decision to destroy an ants' nest, be aware that its actual size underground will be far larger, probably some multiple, of the size you may estimate by what is visible on the surface. There are 51 native ant species in the UK.5Ant recording and identification. (n.d.). NatureSpot. Retrieved June 3, 2023, from The most commonly found ones are black ants (Lasius niger), yellow meadow ants (Lasius flavus), red ants (Myrmica rubra) and wood ants (Formica rufa). These different ant species have different levels of resistance and susceptibility to the ant-control methods outlined underneath. Therefore, if one method does not work, do not be discouraged but try another one. Avoid trying to mix and match methods as one method may attenuate the efficacy of the other – choose one method and stick with it until it succeeds or fails. Most of the well-known commercial insecticides and applications for reducing the presence of ants are formulated for use in dwellings and other buildings. These are not meant for use in the garden and may well cause damage to plant life. Also, though these applications will certainly kill ants in exposed locations then (except for ant bait stations) they will not be of any effect in eliminating an ants' nest. Boiling water is a well-known ant-killer but, for obvious reasons, this is not a solution for the lawn or close to plant life. If the ants' nest is a metre or so away from the lawn or from the estimated extremity of the root system of the nearest plant, pour boiling water – bucketfuls – on the nest and into all the holes you can see; if not, then douse the ants' nest with bucketfuls of cold water every day or two (unless succulents or such are nearby!). You could also run water – lots of it – through the hosepipe and jet it into all the entry/exit holes that you can spot. Ants dislike damp conditions, and may soon decide to shift to a more congenial neighbourhood. White vinegar is another well-known ant-killer which – unlike boiling water – will not harm plant life. It is the mild acid in white vinegar that is the knockout agent. How, though, to deliver the vinegar where it counts – in the nest? Fill a jet washer or jet spray machine with white vinegar and shoot it into the ants' nest's entry holes. If you cannot spot them, then spray it all around the ants' nest, surrounding and soaking it with white vinegar. You will have to do this several times but the net result will be the elimination of nearly the whole colony with the survivors hightailing it for less inhospitable nesting grounds. Sprinkle food-grade diatomaceous earth all around the ants' nest, especially where you spot the entry holes. Try to get it inside of the holes. Diatomaceous earth will kill the ants, but there's a catch: it will also kill other insects and may also kill small garden life like amphibians. That is because the microscopic razor-sharp edges of diatomaceous earth abrade insect exoskeletons and also dehydrate insects and small animal life.6Zeni, V., Baliota, G. V., Benelli, G., Canale, A., & Athanassiou, C. G. (2021). Diatomaceous Earth for Arthropod Pest Control: Back to the Future. Molecules, 26(24), 7487. Damp and wet conditions greatly degrade the potency of diatomaceous earth so be sure to use it when the earth and the weather are both dry. This ant control technique is in the main an effective one for all types of ants and though it will not eliminate an ants' nest it will at least keep reducing the ant population. This is the original 'bait station' technique that has been used by farmers and country gardeners for generations. Do not use this method in conjunction with any other. Make a mixture of sugar (preferably icing sugar) and boric acid powder in a ratio of 8 parts sugar to 1 part boric acid. Mix this in bottled water so as to form a gooey liquid with the consistency of treacle or honey. Do not use tap water as impurities in it could put off the ants from consuming the bait – or the minerals or ions in tap water could react with the boric acid and neutralise its potency. Drop and spread this thick gooey concoction on and around the ants' nest, particularly at the holes. Keep doing so every couple of days. Worker ants will take this toxic mix into the nest for the queen and the rest of the colony. Steinernema feltiae are microscopic organisms that act as a 'slow poison' on an ant colony. These nematodes enter the insects' body cavities and then release bacteria, which destroy tissue and poison the ants.7Insect-Parasitic Nematodes for the Management of Soil-Dwelling Insects. (n.d.). Penn State Extension. Retrieved June 3, 2023, from The variables are that there are a few different brands of this nematode and several different species of ants. One brand may deliver excellent results with one species while failing with another species. These nematode formulations have to be used within a week or two of delivery, have to be mixed very precisely with water, and must not be applied in sunlight or under extreme temperatures. Also, they are most effective between April and September. One plus point of this method is that these nematodes act against most pests that are destructive to plant life but are harmless to beneficial predators as well as to plant life. Ant bait stations are so constructed that ants, attracted to the enticing bait inside the plastic structure, can get in and out while other soil-dwelling insects are either not interested or cannot enter the precisely-fabricated station. Worker ants collect the toxic bait, usually in gel form, and take it back to the nest for the queen and the rest of the colony.8Tips for Effective Ant Baiting. (n.d.). NC State Extension Publications. Retrieved June 3, 2023, from As the appetising bait contains some or another potent poison, the ants start to die. The few ants that remain cannot sustain the colony, which collapses. Bait stations can be placed by the entry holes of the nest or along foraging pathways. Eliminating an ants' nest is not an exact science (and it is certainly not an art). It is a trial-and-error process. If you have decided to get rid of an ants' nest, the important thing is to approach it as a difficult project that will require sustained work. As a last resort, you can call in professional exterminators but do not get discouraged too quickly, and be persistent. While it's completely normal to see ants in the garden, they can become irksome in large numbers. Most ants are harmless and beneficial to the ecosystem. However, some species can cause painful stings, infest food, chew into wood, and damage grass with their unsightly mounds. Whether you've recently had an ant invasion or just want to enjoy an ant-free lunch on your patio, read on to learn four ways to get rid of ants outside and prevent them from returning. From fast-acting solutions to long-lasting methods, here are four ways to get rid of ants in your outdoor space: Credit: n-s-d / Getty Images Attacking the leader of the colony—which is the ant queen—is by far the most effective course of action if you're able to locate the ants' nest. Note that some species, like the carpenter ant and Argentine ant, have more than one queen so treating a single nest isn't going to eradicate the entire colony. Follow the worker ants' trails until you reach their headquarters—this is where they crawl in with food for the rest of the colony to eat. Then, drench the nest with a properly labeled insecticide and cover the area with debris to kill them off before they get a chance to relocate. Granules, gels, and foam ant killers are ideal for destroying nests. Gel and foam versions work best for hard-to-reach crevices (e.g. under lap siding) since they come with long extension tubes. On the other hand, we recommend granules if you're tackling ant hills on your lawn or in your pavers. If you don't want to go the chemical route, pour boiling water into the nests' openings for a natural approach. Keep in mind that boiling water kills vegetation, so avoid using it on your lawn or near flower beds. Always wear safety gloves when dealing with insecticides and follow the manufacturer's instructions to the letter for effective results. Chemical insecticides should only be used in areas that children and pets don't have access to unless stated otherwise. Although not always preventative, ant sprays are fast-acting, which might come in handy for outdoor dining and lounging. Simply spray it wherever you see ants to kill them on the spot. Aerosol sprays are great for spot treatment. Not only do they eliminate ants on contact, but they also deal with nuisance pests like roaches and ticks.For a broader treatment, hose-end sprayers would be your best bet. These products hook easily to garden hoses and can be applied on foundations, patios, wooden decks, lawns, and landscapes, with some treating up to 5,000 square feet of outdoor surface. Some brands even provide ant control for up to 12 weeks and can kill the most resistant of ants. Not all ant sprays have harsh chemical smells. Some sprays contain only natural, plant-based ingredients, leaving pleasant scents that are enjoyable to humans and threatening to ants. Always check the back of the product to see if it's effective against the ant species you're trying to eliminate. Some ant killers include synthetic insecticides (such as permethrin or cypermethrin). These chemicals can kill beneficial bugs like bees and ladybugs. They're also highly toxic to fish and may harm birds when mixed with other toxins. Opt for sprays that use pyrethrins instead, which are lower in toxicity. Worker ants are always on the hunt for food, so tricking them with mouth-watering treats laced with poison works like magic. Place ant bait stations along their trails or next to their nest if you're able to track it down. They'll then carry these "gifts'' back to their colony, poisoning the queen and all the minions that take a bite. Ant baits—which can be store-bought or made at home—come in both liquid and solid forms. While sugar-loving ants prefer liquid baits, grease and protein-eating ants respond best to solid, crumbly baits. Again, you'll have to first identify the ant to know which bait will work best. This method is slow-acting, meaning it will take a few weeks to fully eradicate them all. But other than that, it offers a more permanent solution to ant problems. Non-toxic to humans and pets, yet effective at slaying ants, Diatomaceous earth (DE) is a powdery substance made from fossilized remains of tiny aquatic algae. It feels soft to human hands, but to ants and other insects, consider DE a million little shards of glass. Plus, this powder doesn't need to be eaten for it to be effective. A simple touch is all it takes to penetrate the ant's exoskeleton and dehydrate it until it dies. The downside, though, is that DE doesn't affect ants that don't come into contact with it. Sprinkle DE sparingly along trails, on plants they climb, and around ant mounds to kill the workers. If you manage to eliminate all foraging members, the queen will have no option but to die of starvation. Keep repeating this process every one to two weeks until you no longer see any ants. Always wear protective gear and avoid skin contact when handling DE. While generally harmless, this powder can cause shortness of breath if inhaled in large amounts and can be irritating to the eyes and skin. Only use food-grade diatomaceous earth; pool maintenance DE is toxic to people, animals, and plants. If you really can't stand ants roaming around your garden or getting to your outdoor lounging and entertaining spaces, it's best to prevent them from barging in. To prevent future ant infestations: Keep your plants, trees, and shrubs free of aphids. These small, sap-sucking insects produce honeydew, which is a favorite of sweet-loving ants. Perform a broadcast ant treatment on your entire yard every few months. Remove any clutter, decaying logs, leftover food, and fruit drops in your garden. Use ant-repelling plants, such as mint and thyme, for further protection. Store firewood and other wood piles away from areas you want ant-free. Carpenter ants often inhabit these. FAQ Whether all-natural or chemically made, ant sprays are designed to immobilize ants on the spot with the help of toxic pesticides and repelling smells. Some products even leave a residual control that continues to kill ants for a couple of days or up to several weeks. Since ants are most active at night, consider setting your ant baits a little before sundown. This way, they will be the first thing the ants notice when they leave their nest to forage for food. If you're planning on destroying their nest, your best shot would be during the daytime when most ants are inside. If you're unsure of your ant type, don't know where the nest is, or are dealing with an unusually large-scale ant issue, consider reaching out to a pest control service. A professional will have no trouble identifying the ant species and can offer an appropriate treatment tailored to your needs. Learning how to kill an ant nest but not your lawn is the key to enjoying months of summer bliss time outdoors in a space that is ant-free, but also lush and healthy.Our home and backyard pros reveal the seven best methods that will achieve this, including the products to use, avoid, and how best to get rid of ants without sending the health of your lawn firmly and quickly downhill.Once you know how to get rid of ants in your backyard without compromising the health of your grass, you'll be able to avoid unsightly brown patches and this pest, too.How pros kill ant nests but not lawnsIf you've covered the basics of how to get rid of ants, it's important to leave the surrounding area unscathed as dead lawn can open up a proverbial can of worms by allowing other pests or fungus to settle in its place.Where our experts have recommended particular products, I have sourced matching and highly-rated items from trusted retailers to help you banish ant nests and preserve your lawn.All prices were correct at the time of publication.Why ants have nested in your lawnAnts are most active in summer as they're constantly searching for food and water for the colony and its latest additions, as well as seeking shelter from heat or humidity. This is when you may notice lines of ants traversing to and from the entrance of their nest.Understanding why ants have picked your healthy lawn to nest in is a key part of eliminating their hub without killing other plant life nearby, especially your grass.Amber Munday, a home improvement specialist at Build and Renovate, says, "Whether you love them or hate them, there's no denying ants are remarkable creatures. They have large, complex societies, employ fungus-farming techniques, and have established colonies almost everywhere on Earth. "Thankfully, they are small and haven't developed a dominant collective intelligence but an ant invasion in your lawn can be frustrating, especially when you're left wondering why they chose yours over your neighbor's."Amber explains the two key reasons your lawn might be appealing for ant colonies to nest, which can lead to ants coming into your home."Ants are attracted to damp environments," she says. "Any sources of water or moisture, such as bird baths, gutters, or leaky pipes, are valuable to them. Mulch and rocks can keep the soil in your yard moist, which may attract ants. Additionally, most species of ants are drawn to sugary, sticky substances, including sap and nectar from certain plants."Here are seven lawn-safe methods to get rid of ant nests:Method 1: Bait stationsItay Simchi, founder of Proven House Buyersis an experienced real estate investor and expert with extensive experience in dealing with pests and unwanted critters in his renovations and home projects.He says, "Dealing with ant nests in lawns is a common challenge many homeowners face. However, I've found that there are still several methods that can be effective in eliminating ants nests without direct access to the nest itself."Itay recommends in the first instance setting up bait stations near the area where you've seen ants, as they will take the bait back to the nest.He says, "You can use commercial or homemade bait stations made from sugar and water, peanut butter or honey."We recommend Amazon's Choice, the TERRO T1813B Outdoor Ready-to-Use Liquid Ant Bait Stake Killer Trap. It comes in a set of 12 and you stake the vertical bait stations directly into you lawn. Place them as instructed to effective, rapid colony death. Customers rated this product 4.4/5 in more than 8,900 reviews.Amber suggests a mix of boric acid and sugar. The borates will dehydrate the ants and kill them off, and they only need contact with it to work. The sugar bait gets them into the powder, and it will then stick to their bodies, ensuring ants carry the boric acid back to the nest, doing the leg work for you.She says, "To create this mixture, combine boric acid and sugar until it forms a paste-like consistency. Place small amounts of the paste around the ant nest. The sugar will lure the ants, who will carry the paste back to their nest. After a few minutes, the boric acid will take effect, eliminating the queen and the rest of the ants."We like the JT Eaton 5 lb Boric Acid Insecticidal Dust in Resealable Pail available at The Home Depot as you can use as little or as much as you need and seal it away for next season or treatment when finished.Method 2: Natural repellantsWhilst natural bug repellents are easy to make at home with items you will already have in the pantry or your kitchen, these might take a bit longer to impact.Itay says however, it's vital to stay the course. He says, "It may take some trial and error to find the most effective method for eliminating ant nests from your backyard whilst protecting your lawn, especially when using natural methods. It may take several weeks or even months to completely eliminate an ant infestation."Itay adds, "You can use ant deterrent granules, which can be placed near the area where you've seen ants. These granules can be made from natural ingredients such as cinnamon, cayenne pepper, and other spices that ants find unappealing. The granules will help deter ants from approaching the area and eventually starve the nest."Other combinations to pour into and around nests include cinnamon and cayenne pepper, both natural pest deterrents. Itay says to simply sprinkle the powder along ant trails or around areas where you've seen ants. You can also mix the powder with water to create a paste and apply it directly to ant mounds.Certain essential oils, such as peppermint, tea tree, and lavender oil, have natural ant-repelling properties (this set of six Lahunamoon Store essential oils on Amazon are all smells that repel bugs). Mix the essential oils with water and spray the solution around areas where you've seen ants. You can also add a few drops of the essential oils to a spray bottle filled with water and spray it directly on ant mounds.A mixture of equal parts vinegar, which can be used for so many cleaning tasks around the home, and water can be used to repel ants. Simply mix the solution in a spray bottle and spray it around areas where you've seen ants.Amber says to pour one liter, that's a quarter of a gallon, of white vinegar (such as Aunt Fannie's Extra Strength Cleaning Vinegar from Amazon) directly into a lawn nest, staing it "can work wonders."She adds, "It is not harmful to the soil or your plants, but it will kill the ants on contact by drowning them. It is one of the most popular homemade outdoor ant killers."A white vinegar spray is also often used as an ant repellent because of its ability to make the insects disoriented. You may have to reapply it frequently, though, as vinegar will keep ants away only as long as it's scent lasts."Vinegar is particularly good at disrupting or wiping out the chemical signals ants use to navigate to and from their colony.Method 3: Traps with sugar waterYou can also use traps with sugar water to lure ants into a container or a trap, dealing with the nest by vacating it.Itay says, "Mix equal parts sugar and water in a bowl, and place it near the area where you've seen ants. The ants will be attracted to the sugar and will gather at the bowl. Once you've collected enough ants, dispose of them safely and repeat the process until the nest is eliminated."Itay says when trying to find the colony, follow their trails and identify where they're coming from. Look for holes in your lawn with disturbed earth, or dirt mounds that reveal their nests entry spot.He adds, "Follow ant trails using a flashlight or a magnifying glass to see where they're heading. Once you've identified the location of the colony, you can use your chosen method to eliminate it."Method 4: Boiling water (in some cases)Boiling water is an effective method of killing a large number of ants immediately, and can seep into the ant colony below the mound, which is often much larger (the ant hill is only the tip of the iceberg).However, it kills vegetation including the grass in your lawn indiscriminately. The boiling water method is best reserved if you were mowing the lawn or digging to plant something and revealed the opening or mound of the nest. With this clear visibility, you can use a kettle of boiling water to carefully pour the hot liquid exactly where it is needed, sparing your lawn.Amber says, "Pouring two to three gallons of boiling water on an ant mound will kill about 60% of ants (the remaining 40% have a chance to scatter in a timely manner). Be warned, that extremely hot water may kill the surrounding vegetation in your yard as well."Method 5: Dish soap and oilYou can safely use dishwashing liquid such as Dawn Soap available at Walmart and oil to penetrate the ants' exoskeletons and suffocate them.Amber says, "To prepare, mix half a teaspoon of liquid dish soap with one and a half teaspoons of cooking oil (olive oil and canola oil work best) with one quart of water (0.946 liters/2.08 lbs or 33.38 oz.). "Once the mixture is ready, pour some into a spray bottle to tackle ants outside the nest, and pour the rest directly into the nest."Using the spray around the nest and therefore making contact with your lawn isn't enough to damage it. Once it has done it's job on the ants, you can use fresh or rain water to further dilute the mix and protect your lawn.Method 6: Diatomaceous earthFood-grade diatomaceous earth (such as Harris Food Grade Organic Crawling Insect Killer Powder from Target in a 4lb bag and rated 5/5 stars by customers) is effective against various pests, including ants, fleas and cockroaches, and can be used on your lawn and indoors.Amber says. "It's best to sprinkle it on ant trails or around plants you want to protect. It works well on dry soil. The wetter the surface, the longer it will take to be effective."Method 7: NematodesNematodes are microscopic worms naturally found in soil that are used widely to control soil pests and available to buy at specialist companies such as Arbico Organics. It's important to seek expert advise for your backyard and lawn specifics so you don't end up with nematodes that will eat the roots of your plants. "Beneficial nematodes target ants by hunting and devouring them," explains Amber. "Place the nematodes in a bucket of water, break up any lumps, and let them soak for a few minutes. Then, use a watering can, knapsack sprayer, or hose-end sprayer to apply the solution to your soil and plants."These natural predators will drive away ants from your lawn without posing any health or environmental risks. Additionally, they will also target other pests and insects, such as beetles and fungi."Other tipsTo help you along with killing ant nests whilst protecting your lawn, Itay adds, "Plant marigolds or other ant-repelling plants around the area to deter ants from returning."Amazon's Choice for Sow Right Seeds Crackerjack Marigold Seeds are highly rated by customers and will allow you plant them where you like in abundance.Itay also advises repeating treatment every few weeks as needed, depending on the severity of the infestation. Maintaining or preventing most any pest problem is usually more effective than starting from scratch.If you remain concerned about your lawn health, feeling overwhelmed by the ant nests that have revealed themselves with mounds and visible ant trails, or simply don't want to kill the ants yourself, consider hiring a professional pest control service. Whilst tackling it yourself will likely be cheaper, it's OK to hand over the infestation for a professional to troubleshoot. Check the company's reviews online before proceeding with a booking and if they have a website, the 'about' page which will help you determine how much experience or expertise they have in dealing with your situation. The United States Environmental Protection Agency offers great advice on what to ask when picking a pest control pro.Meet our expertsIf you'd had your fill of lawn care, learn about grass alternatives, or get prepped for this year's flying ant day by delving into our expert guide on how to get rid of flying ants quickly. It is not exactly unusual to have ants, or even an ants' nest, in your yard. In fact, ants perform multiple beneficial functions in the garden. That said, there are some legitimate reasons to eradicate an ants' nest, particularly if you have a problem with aphids or similar pests. We lay out half-a-dozen methods, from plain old water to highly-technical nematode release. So you have an ants' nest in your garden. Before you go ballistic and take out the heavy artillery, let's take a minute or two to evaluate whether the ants are an actual problem and need to be taken care of, and, if so, choose a solution that fits the scale of the problem and will do no or minimal collateral damage. Ants in the yard are, well, normal. That doesn't mean you have to have them in your garden if you don't want to, it's just to get across that there's nothing particularly unusual about having ants in your garden. You may be concerned because you know about an ants' nest in your garden. But many, many homeowners have ants' nests in their respective gardens – but they don't even know about the problem and so the 'problem' is not a problem. So where an ants' nest is concerned, perhaps ignorance is bliss. If you know you have an ants' nest in your garden, we'd recommend you only get rid of it if you also know that the ants are damaging your garden. The purpose of this article is not to elaborate upon the benefits that ants can and do bring in the garden. However, so that you can make a fully informed decision as to that ants' nest, before we proceed to outline the ways to get rid of it, a concise outline as to the beneficial effects of these tiny insects. Ants, as such and under normal circumstances, are not garden pests. For the most part they are teeny-weeny 'garden hands'. To begin with, they are natural-born tillers of the soil. Their incessant subterranean activity results in particulate matter from the surface being pulled underneath, deep down, and vice versa, improving the fertility of the soil.1Farji-Brener, A. G., & Werenkaut, V. (2017). The effects of ant nests on soil fertility and plant performance: a meta-analysis. Journal of Animal Ecology, 86(4), 866–877. Also, their tunnelling into and through the soil aerates it which assists in the decomposition of organic matter – dry leaves and dead earthworms alike. Though ants are scavengers in the main, many UK species are also predators. Many, if not most, species of ants actually control or reduce the population of garden pests because they prey on their larvae and eggs.2Ye, Y. (2019, March 12). Ant larvae defend their homes by eating eggs laid by intruders. New Scientist. Retrieved June 3, 2023, from Ants are territorial insects so as long as your garden has one ant colony you won't be getting another one unless an invading troop attacks and defeats the resident ants.3Hölldobler, B., & Lumsden, C. J. (1980). Territorial Strategies in Ants. Science, 210(4471), 732–739. On the other hand, if you destroy or 'evict' your garden's resident ants, then sooner or later advance scouts or a roaming ant colony will come upon your yard, see it as virgin territory ripe for occupation, and lay down stakes! Also keep in mind that ants play a part in a healthy garden ecosystem. While they prey on various small garden pests, they themselves are preyed upon by small birds, fish and other insects. Getting rid of an entire ant colony can throw that healthy garden ecosystem out of whack. Believe it or not, there are yet more reasons to tolerate an ants' nest in the yard but, like we said, this article is not about the positives of ants in the garden! "I have never had to eliminate an ants nest as a horticulturist," shares Master Horticulturist Colin Skelly. "Nests would rarely be large enough to cause a problem in the garden in the UK context. "The only time I have removed an ants nest would be when they have become a problem in the built environment, particularly entering kitchen spaces to take advantage of a supply of crumbs, sugar, etc." So why, under what circumstances, would it be the right decision to get rid of an ants' nest? First – are the ants ruining your landscaping and depositing piles of soil on the lawn? Is the ants' nest tucked away by the fence or is it an eyesore? Is it getting bigger and bigger? If the answers are 'Yes,' the affirmatives answer the bigger question too. Second – if the ants' nest is near shrubs and plants that have delicate roots or those that are wilting without any discernible reason, then the ants' nest may have to go. Though subsoil ant activity is a good thing in general, when it is below or beside delicate roots, it can disturb them and affect their uptake of soil nutrients. Third – does your garden have an aphid problem that you can't get under control? Or a mealybug or whitefly problem? If yes, then you may need to get rid of the ants' nest. That's because ants and aphids often work together; they have a symbiotic relationship. Just as supply ships victual the Navy while being protected by destroyers, so do aphids provide food to ants, and in turn are protected by them. The same goes for mealybugs and whiteflies. Concisely, aphids, mealybugs and whiteflies as honeydew-producing garden pests are of value to ants because these pests provide sustenance to ants: ants gather the honeydew that these pests secrete and take it to their nest, mainly for the queen but also for the colony.4Farmer ants and their aphid herds. (n.d.). McGill Office for Science and Society. Retrieved June 3, 2023, from This means that if you release ladybirds or lacewings to destroy aphids, mealybugs or whiteflies, your efforts may come to naught because the ants will protect the garden pests (as they are well known to do). If you make the decision to destroy an ants' nest, be aware that its actual size underground will be far larger, probably some multiple, of the size you may estimate by what is visible on the surface. There are 51 native ant species in the UK.5Ant recording and identification. (n.d.). NatureSpot. Retrieved June 3, 2023, from The most commonly found ones are black ants (Lasius niger), yellow meadow ants (Lasius flavus), red ants (Myrmica rubra) and wood ants (Formica rufa). These different ant species have different levels of resistance and susceptibility to the ant-control methods outlined underneath. Therefore, if one method does not work, do not be discouraged but try another one. Avoid trying to mix and match methods as one method may attenuate the efficacy of the other – choose one method and stick with it until it succeeds or fails. Most of the well-known commercial insecticides and applications for reducing the presence of ants are formulated for use in dwellings and other buildings. These are not meant for use in the garden and may well cause damage to plant life. Also, though these applications will certainly kill ants in exposed locations then (except for ant bait stations) they will not be of any effect in eliminating an ants' nest. Boiling water is a well-known ant-killer but, for obvious reasons, this is not a solution for the lawn or close to plant life. If the ants' nest is a metre or so away from the lawn or from the estimated extremity of the root system of the nearest plant, pour boiling water – bucketfuls – on the nest and into all the holes you can see; if not, then douse the ants' nest with bucketfuls of cold water every day or two (unless succulents or such are nearby!). You could also run water – lots of it – through the hosepipe and jet it into all the entry/exit holes that you can spot. Ants dislike damp conditions, and may soon decide to shift to a more congenial neighbourhood. White vinegar is another well-known ant-killer which – unlike boiling water – will not harm plant life. It is the mild acid in white vinegar that is the knockout agent. How, though, to deliver the vinegar where it counts – in the nest? Fill a jet washer or jet spray machine with white vinegar and shoot it into the ants' nest's entry holes. If you cannot spot them, then spray it all around the ants' nest, surrounding and soaking it with white vinegar. You will have to do this several times but the net result will be the elimination of nearly the whole colony with the survivors hightailing it for less inhospitable nesting grounds. Sprinkle food-grade diatomaceous earth all around the ants' nest, especially where you spot the entry holes. Try to get it inside of the holes. Diatomaceous earth will kill the ants, but there's a catch: it will also kill other insects and may also kill small garden life like amphibians. That is because the microscopic razor-sharp edges of diatomaceous earth abrade insect exoskeletons and also dehydrate insects and small animal life.6Zeni, V., Baliota, G. V., Benelli, G., Canale, A., & Athanassiou, C. G. (2021). Diatomaceous Earth for Arthropod Pest Control: Back to the Future. Molecules, 26(24), 7487. Damp and wet conditions greatly degrade the potency of diatomaceous earth so be sure to use it when the earth and the weather are both dry. This ant control technique is in the main an effective one for all types of ants and though it will not eliminate an ants' nest it will at least keep reducing the ant population. This is the original 'bait station' technique that has been used by farmers and country gardeners for generations. Do not use this method in conjunction with any other. Make a mixture of sugar (preferably icing sugar) and boric acid powder in a ratio of 8 parts sugar to 1 part boric acid. Mix this in bottled water so as to form a gooey liquid with the consistency of treacle or honey. Do not use tap water as impurities in it could put off the ants from consuming the bait – or the minerals or ions in tap water could react with the boric acid and neutralise its potency. Drop and spread this thick gooey concoction on and around the ants' nest, particularly at the holes. Keep doing so every couple of days. Worker ants will take this toxic mix into the nest for the queen and the rest of the colony. Steinernema feltiae are microscopic organisms that act as a 'slow poison' on an ant colony. These nematodes enter the insects' body cavities and then release bacteria, which destroy tissue and poison the ants.7Insect-Parasitic Nematodes for the Management of Soil-Dwelling Insects. (n.d.). Penn State Extension. Retrieved June 3, 2023, from The variables are that there are a few different brands of this nematode and several different species of ants. One brand may deliver excellent results with one species while failing with another species. These nematode formulations have to be used within a week or two of delivery, have to be mixed very precisely with water, and must not be applied in sunlight or under extreme temperatures. Also, they are most effective between April and September. One plus point of this method is that these nematodes act against most pests that are destructive to plant life but are harmless to beneficial predators as well as to plant life. Ant bait stations are so constructed that ants, attracted to the enticing bait inside the plastic structure, can get in and out while other soil-dwelling insects are either not interested or cannot enter the precisely-fabricated station. Worker ants collect the toxic bait, usually in gel form, and take it back to the nest for the queen and the rest of the colony.8Tips for Effective Ant Baiting. (n.d.). NC State Extension Publications. Retrieved June 3, 2023, from As the appetising bait contains some or another potent poison, the ants start to die. The few ants that remain cannot sustain the colony, which collapses. Bait stations can be placed by the entry holes of the nest or along foraging pathways. Eliminating an ants' nest is not an exact science (and it is certainly not an art). It is a trial-and-error process. If you have decided to get rid of an ants' nest, the important thing is to approach it as a difficult project that will require sustained work. As a last resort, you can call in professional exterminators but do not get discouraged too quickly, and be persistent. Sign up for daily gardening advice and tips The Almanac Garden Planner - Use It Free for 7 Days!Plan your 2025 garden with our award-winning Garden Planner.Try Now Crumbs moving independently across the kitchen floor? A line of small black things crawling in and out of your trash bin? Looks like you have an ant infestation. Here's how to get rid of ants permanently—from little black ants to carpenter ants—with 8 natural remedies for the kitchen, home, and garden.Ants as PestsAnts play an important role in nature, but most of us can agree that they don't belong in people's homes. Nonetheless, ants are among the most frequent household pests. There are about 1,000 known ant species in North America and over 12,000 species worldwide.In the outdoor world, ants are generally beneficial insects. They mostly live in the garden and help aerate the soil. In addition, they are scavengers, helping to reduce the numbers of other insects—including those we consider pests. Ants are part of the insect order Hymenoptera and count bees and wasps among their relatives.In the indoor world, there are only a few species that come into people's homes. They're not generally dangerous—just annoying. Though ants are familiar insects, in the home, they are sometimes confused with termites. If you look closely enough, you can tell an ant by its slim middle and curved antennae. Termites have thick middles and upright antennae.The body of an ant is divided into three sections: head, thorax, and abdomen. An ant's middle may have one or two segments or "nodes." This feature divides ants into the aptly named groups of one-node and two-node ants.As with bees, ants' colonies are largely female. Wingless adult ants are the colony's workers, who are in charge of gathering food, feeding larvae, sustaining the nest, and protecting the colony. The colony queen's only job is to lay eggs. Male ants have wings and mate with the queen.Common House Ant SpeciesCarpenter AntsCarpenter ants are large, ranging from 1/4-inch to 5/8-inch long. They are dark brown or black, but some species may have red or yellow coloring.When carpenter ants build their nests, usually in damp or decaying wood, they dig out tunnels which weakens the wood from the inside. You'll know you have these pests by the appearance of small holes on the surface of wood and by the debris they produce from tunneling. Eastern Black Carpenter Ants. Photo by Ryan Hodnett/Wikimedia Commons Odorous House AntsOdorous house ants are only about 1/8-inch long and have beehive-shaped abdomens. They are dark brown or black.When threatened or crushed, odorous house ants give off a smell of rotten coconut, hence their name. While these ants do not pose a public health risk, they can contaminate food.Little Black AntsLittle black ants are 1/16-inch long with two-segmented abdomens. They can be dark brown to black, but usually very dark black. These ants are shiny.While little black ants don't pose a threat to our health, they can be a nuisance and contaminate food. The most common reason for ants to venture inside is in search of food. The first step is to make your house less attractive to ants. They love it when you leave dirty dishes in the sink, don't wipe up sticky countertops, and leave crumbs on the floor. They also enjoy pet food as much as your dog or cat. What starts with a few ants feasting on the juice that never got wiped up off of the floor can turn into a real pest problem. It only takes one ant to discover a smorgasbord of crumbs and then ring the dinner bell for the rest of the colony!Though most ants rarely cause significant damage or harm, their abundant numbers can become a nuisance.Natural Remedies to Get Rid of AntsThe first step in stopping an infestation is to determine where the ants are invading from—perhaps a poorly sealed window, a crack in the baseboard, or a gap in the doorframe. When you see ants, don't squish them; let them lead you to their entry and exit point.Once you determine how the ants are getting in, consider doing the following:Soap and Water: First, clean up. Use soap and water to wipe up ant trails or chemical paths. As ants explore, they leave behind a trail of pheromones, which helps their fellow ants know where to go. Destroying this trail will prevent other ants from finding their way in. Lemon and Water: Some folks use lemon juice to mask this ant trail, making a spray of three parts water and one part lemon juice to spray around window ledges, door frames, and wherever ants are entering. Vinegar and Water: Consider changing your cleaning habits by adding vinegar to water! Many readers create a spray bottle of half water/half vinegar and use it for cleaning kitchen counters and mopping floors. Ants steer clear of vinegar which is acidic. Some add drops of peppermint oil to the mix. Just cheap white vinegar is fine. If you find the ants' next, pour in about one liter of vinegar. Diatomaceous Earth: Dust around infested areas with diatomaceous earth. DE (aka silicon dioxide) is an abrasive material that will dehydrate any ants that come in contact with it. Use food-grade, not swimming pool DE. Sprinkle diatomaceous earth along the perimeter of your kitchen, your baseboards, ledges, door thresholds, cracks, and elsewhere. Wear a face mask to avoid breathing in. It's not harmful, but it's best not to touch DE. Do not wet DE or let it get wet. Borax, Sugar, and Water: Folks swear by Borax, a boron compound, as an effective method of controlling an ant infestation. It's a natural substance that is non-toxic to humans when used properly and poisonous to them when ingested. But ants are not attracted to Borax itself, so you have to mix it with something tempting to ants, such as sugar. Add water to the borax and sugar mix to make a thick, sugary borax-y syrup. The worker ants will take it back into the nest. Borax needs to be kept away from pets and small children, so put it where they can't reach it; otherwise, it's relatively safe beyond that, as it is only toxic if you eat it. Cinnamon and Peppermint: If you're concerned about Borax as an indoor remedy, try natural remedies. Cinnamon sprinkled where ants come inside is an effective DIY repellent. Cinnamon oil also works as it's stronger. Peppermint oil works the same way. Either dip a Q-tip in the oil and draw borders as ants won't cross a smelly path. Or, make a spray bottle—add drops of essential oil into soapy water (20 drops per 2 cups of water). Cornmeal, Cream of Wheat, Coffee Grounds: Ants are beneficial for the outdoors. However, if you have ant nests or problems with ants in your garden beds, try these natural remedies. Sprinkle cornmeal, cream of wheat, or old (brewed) coffee grounds around the ant nests or in cracks on the patio. It will take a week or so, but you'll often see the ants move home to settle a distance away. Organic Ant Bait: Alternatively, purchase liquid ant bait traps, such as Terro, which are made with Borax and specially formulated to attract ants. Place baits close to visible ant trails but outside the reach of pets and children. When the ants carry the bait food back to the nest, the other members of the colony ingest it. The bait will work most effectively if you keep other surfaces clean so that the bait is the only sweet substance available to attract the ants.Avoid the temptation to use pesticides inside the home. They may eliminate a few visible ants, but the queen ant (sheltered inside the wall) will quickly make more work ants to replace them. Also, pesticides are chemicals that also kill helpful insects, such as bees and predatory insects.How To Prevent Ants From Entering Your HomeOnce you've stopped an infestation, it's time to ensure that it doesn't happen again.Wipe counter surfaces thoroughly. Be diligent about picking up crumbs and cleaning up spills, especially sugary, sweet liquids like lemonade, juice, and soda.Keep floors swept and rugs vacuumed.Do dishes promptly.Keep food sealed. Use food bags tightly closed or consider using hard, sealed storage containers that can't be easily chewed through, like glass or plastic.Store ripe fruit in the refrigerator.Clean up pet food as soon as pets are done eating. Wipe around pet food bowls and rinse daily.Empty and clean garbage cans and recycling bins frequently.Check houseplants and remove if they have ants, as ant nests are often in the soil.Seal cracks and crevices that ants may be using to enter your home. Seal around windows and doors and all cable, pipe, and wire entry points. Use silicone caulk, putty, or glue.Keep firewood stacked at least 20 feet away from your home, as ants may see this space as a perfect place to put their colony!We hope you found this advice helpful.See our related article on how to keep rodents (mice and rats) and squirrels out of the home.