



earth-wise guide to

Fire Ants



Enlarged photo of fire ants

description

Fire ant colonies contain the queen(s), winged males and females, workers (wingless, sterile females) and brood (eggs, larvae and pupae).

infestation

Fire ants create mounds up to 18" tall. They prefer open sunny areas such as lawns, pastures, parks and disturbed areas, and often nest under side walks, slabs or at the base of trees.

problems

Fire ants can be a problem year round but are most prevalent in the spring and fall. Fire ants don't injure turfgrass but mounds become unsightly; ants are aggressive and cause painful stings that may become infected. They can invade electrical equipment and cause short circuits.



Fire ant mound

Least Toxic Solutions

- Properly identify as fire ants — many other species of ants occur in Texas and some are predators of fire ants; call the Extension office at 854-9600 for details, or visit <http://fireant.tamu.edu>
- Carefully pour a large pot (about 3 gallons) of boiling water on each mound. This will kill a mound about 60% of the time; this works best after a rain
- Introduce nematodes (*Steinernema carpocapsae*). They are small round worms that attack fire ant larvae, as well as grubs and other soil-dwelling larvae. They work best when applied to moist soil at dusk
- Choose baits over contact products; baits are safer to use because they are ant-specific and formulated with very small percentages of the active ingredients
- For less than 5 fire ant mounds per 1/4 acre, treat mounds individually
- For more than 5 mounds per 1/4 acre, broadcast ant BAIT products once or twice a year, mid-April and September (fall application reduces spring infestations)
- Apply baits when ants are foraging, (toss a potato chip next to an active mound in the yard and check back in 15 minutes to see if ants are feeding)
- In hot weather, apply baits in evening when temperatures are cooler
- Use fresh bait—opened containers may last only a few months
- Share bait with a neighbor before it goes stale; it can help lengthen the time between infestations
- Avoid application before rain (at least 8 hours)
- **DO NOT USE GASOLINE OR DIESEL FUEL TO TREAT MOUNDS**
- If you feel you must use a contact pesticide, make the most earth-friendly choice (see rating guide on back)
- Use insecticides only where recommended on the product label — for instance, do not use them in the vegetable garden unless specified
- Make sure to apply the proper amount of bait (many baits are applied 1-1.5 pounds per acre) and use a hand-held spreader set on the lowest setting. Walk in a criss-cross pattern for good coverage of the whole area

Neighborhood Ant-Out!

Organize your neighbors to treat fire ants at the same time - you share the cost of the bait and control the pests rather than driving them from yard to yard

If you have unwanted or banned chemicals (Dursban or Diazinon) in your garage, please take them for safe disposal to a household hazardous waste facility. Visit www.yardwise.org for more information

product toxicity comparisons

Evaluation of active ingredients only; does not include toxicity information on inert or "other" ingredients.

Toxicity/Threat:

○ low ◐ low to moderate ◑ high ● highest NA not applicable
 ? unknown toxicity ☠ banned by EPA 🌍 earth-wise

Hazards:



note	Product Name	active ingredient(s) / concentrations	human toxicity acute	human toxicity chronic	aquatic life	birds, bees, pets	soil mobility	environmental persistence
Baits								
most toxic	Green Light® Fire Ant Control with Conserve®	Spinosad 0.015%	◐	?	◑	◑	○	◐
	Spectracide® Fire Ant Killer Plus Preventer Bait Once & Done!™	Indoxacarb 0.016%	◐	?	◐	◐	?	?
	Amdro® Fire Ant Bait	Hydramethylnon 0.73%	◐	◑	◑	◑	○	◐
	Amdro® Fire Strike™ Fire Ant Bait	Hydramethylnon 0.036% methoprene	◐	◑	◑	◑	○	◐

Mound Treatment

most toxic	Spectracide® Fire Ant Killer Granules Mound Destroyer™	Lambda-cyhalothrin 0.04%	◑	◐	◑	◑	◐	◑/○
	Bayer Advanced™ PowerForce® Multi-Insect Killer Concentrate	Cyfluthrin 0.75%	◐	?	●	◑	○	◐
	Bayer Advanced™ Fire Ant Killer Ready-to-Use Dust	Beta-cyfluthrin 0.5%	◐	?	●	◑	○	◐
	Ortho® Orthene® Fire Ant Killer	Acephate 50%	◐	◑	◐	●	◑	◐
	Eliminator® Fire Ant Killer Dust	Deltamethrin .05%	◐	◐	●	●	○	◑/○
	Spectracide® Fire Ant Killer Ready-to-Use Dust	Permethrin 0.25%	◐	◑	●	●	○	◑/○

Yard Treatment

most toxic	Garden Tech® Over'n Out!™ Fire Ant Killer Granules	Fipronil 0.0103%	◐	○	◑	◑	○	◑
	Ortho® Max® Fire Ant Killer Broadcast Granules	Bifenthrin 0.1%	◐	?	●	◑	○	◐
	Scotts® Bonus® S Max Southern Weed and Feed & Fire Ant Killer	Bfenthrin 0.110%, Atrazine 1.089%	◐	◑	◑	○	●	◑

The City of Austin and the Texas Cooperative Extension developed this information sheet as a comparative reference only. Listing of specific product trade names does not constitute an endorsement of its use. Many other pesticides and pesticide products are available and may be suitable for use other than those listed in these tables.

Products rated by Grady J. Glenn, Ph.D., B.C.E., of the Pesticide Education Program, Texas Cooperative Extension who can be reached for questions at (979) 862-1035. The rating system was developed by Philip Dickey of the Washington Toxics Coalition.

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For additional landscaping advice, visit www.growgreen.org