

Exotic Ants Invading Southeast Texas

It may sound like science fiction, but it's true. A new exotic insect species, the Raspberry crazy ant, has invaded 11 counties in the Houston area since pest control operator Tom Raspberry discovered the ants in Pasadena in 2002. By 2008 they had spread to Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston, Hardin, Harris, Jefferson, Liberty, Montgomery, Orange, Walker, and Wharton counties, and they're being found in an ever-widening area.

At this time, the only way to slow the spread of these ants is through expensive professional pest control. Fire ant baits and other home pesticides are not effective.

As they continue to invade, Raspberry crazy ants decrease home and property values and could devastate the nursery industry and agriculture — both livestock and crops. Their activity could also damage critical electrical and computer systems in traffic signals, businesses, schools, airports, and hospitals.

Entomologists and researchers are seeking funding to develop better ways to control these ants, but in the meantime they need your help in identifying colonies and discouraging them from nesting in the landscape.



Here's What You Can Do

- Report suspicious ant problems in your landscape, and have ants identified by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service.
- If your property is infested, remove all nonessential objects from the ground to discourage nesting.
- Do not move infested articles — such as potted plants, lumber, and yard waste — to uninfested areas.
- Keep plants free of aphids, mealy bugs, scale, and other insects that are a food source for Raspberry crazy ants.

About Raspberry Crazy Ants

- They are related to the Caribbean crazy ant, a serious pest in parts of Florida.
- About 1/8 inch long, reddish brown, and nest throughout the landscape. Queens, eggs, larvae, and pupae can be found under, or in, almost any object. Entire colony will move to a new site when disturbed. Multiple queens lay hundreds of eggs, so each colony may contain millions of ants.
- Spread mainly by ground migration, not by mating flights. Can be spread by almost any ant-infested container or vehicle.
- Bite, but don't sting. Can displace other ant species and affect wildlife such as honeybees and songbirds.

For more information, visit: http://urbanentomology.tamu.edu/ants/exotic_tx.cfm



Partners in Prevention

This information was developed on behalf of the Crazy Ant Task Force members from the following agencies and organizations:

- Texas A&M University Department of Entomology, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, and Texas AgriLife Research
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
 - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine
 - Agricultural Research Service
- Texas Department of Agriculture
- Texas Department of Transportation
- Texas Parks and Wildlife
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife
- Texas Nursery and Landscape Association



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