

**Keep Argentine Ants from Invading Your Home**  
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The Chances were discussing vacation. Do we invade the grandparents in Tennessee or make our way to the coast? The grandparents won out! There is just something about grandparents that attracts children or grandchildren.

Some insect travelers want to visit your home – only they want to stay! Argentine ants are busy, 1/8 inch long ants which crawl in long, well-organized trails looking for food and water. They do not sting, but they do go up tree trunks and into buildings searching for moisture or food. They especially like sweet liquids. Argentine ants nest in mulched beds or potted plants. They can move into walls in the winter. They are hard to control. Even pest control companies have trouble killing these ants.

Once an Argentine ant finds a food source, it tells the other ants. The colony forms a trail to the food source. To control these ants, remove food sources and try to keep the ants outside. Spraying ant trails inside will do little to control them and may make them worse.

***Thoroughly empty and rinse all containers*** (e.g., soda cans) before discarding. Seal food in insect resistant containers. Thoroughly clean cabinets. Seal garbage well in plastic bags.

***Control insects on plants that create honey dew.*** Honey dew is a sticky sweet substance produced by aphids, scales and whiteflies. Select plants that are not susceptible to these pests. Clean up dead insects on window sills and floors. Ants use them as food.

***Keep plant limbs from touching the outside of your home.*** Ants can enter this way. Seal entry points you see. Check potted plants to see if ants are nesting in them.

***Do not over-water mulched areas.*** Let them dry slightly between waterings. Water once a week with one inch of water or twice a week with three-quarter inches of water.

***Do not use too much mulch.*** Keep it two to four inches deep. Avoid mulched beds around the house. Pull the mulch away from the house a foot or so. Treat this narrow strip with insecticide.

***Once you have done these things, spray points of entry around the house.*** Treat window sills and door thresholds. With severe infestations, you may want to spray a perimeter around the house. Spray a couple of feet up on the house and four to six-foot of the ground next to the house. Use sprays labeled for ant control or have a pest control company do this. Sprays help keep ants outside but will not kill the colony.

Argentine ants nest in mulch and lawns so you can treat mulched beds or the lawn with Over and Out (containing the active ingredient fipronil). It is labeled for fire ants but should also give control of Argentine ants. It should give a longer control than sprays if used properly.

***Baits are one of the best ways to kill Argentine ant colonies.*** Ants feed on baits and take them to the nest. This will take some time but should kill the colony.

***Tips on using baits:***

- Outside use granular baits formulated for fire ant control. Use ant baits containing active ingredients like hydramethylnon, indoxacarb or fipronil.
- Inside use liquid baits like Combat (Fipronil) or Terro (borax).
- Apply baits when ants are actively looking for food. If weather is too cool or too hot for ants to be out and looking for food, baits will not work well. If possible, place baits in the shade.
- If one bait does not work, try another. Some ants prefer one over another.
- Argentine ants are numerous, so use a lot of bait. For granular baits outside, create several dozen quarter-sized piles on the ground where ants are feeding.
- If the weather is dry, use liquid baits since Argentine ants like sweet liquids. Soak a cotton ball with the liquid bait and put it on a small piece of foil or wax paper. Check the cotton ball daily to see if you need to moisten the cotton ball with water so it will continue to attract ants.
- Read and follow all label directions when using any pesticide. Much of this information is from the UGA Pest Control Handbook – [http://www.ent.uga.edu/pmh/Hm\\_Household.pdf](http://www.ent.uga.edu/pmh/Hm_Household.pdf)

***Be patient and persistent.*** If at first you do not succeed, try again. ***You cannot expect to kill all ants in the yard, but you should be able to keep them from making your house their home.***