



How Does Your Garden Grow? Consider this Before Digging in Your Flower Beds ...

Have you ever stopped to consider that what you do in your plant beds, especially up close to your home's foundation, may impact the termite activity in and around your home?

As you dig and plant (or even have construction done) near the foundation of your home, you may be disrupting a termite-treated zone or barrier that you have paid for to prevent a termite infestation. Always keep this in mind *before* you dig!

Many homeowners love to mulch their yards. And there are a variety of mulch brands out there including pine straws and wood/bark mulch. Mulch is meant to insulate and keep plants warm in the winter, and then provide moisture retention and

protection in the dryer months of the year. Research evidence supports the fact that termites are attracted to both increased thermal and moisture gradients. In lay terms, this means that termites will follow and cue in on increased warmth and water areas near a home. If you are going to use mulch in your garden near your home, rake it away from the home's foundation and the treated zone; you may also want to consider using hardwood over softwood mulch, as softwoods have been shown to be more attractive to termites. Hardwood mulch is harder to find, but may be worth the effort in the long run.

If for any reason you should suspect termite activity, don't forget to give us a call! ■

Don't Let Termites Attack Your Investment

Spring is the time when the most common termites in the country "swarm," or send out winged termites to start new colonies. These termites, known as subterranean termites because they usually are found in or near soil, can cause serious damage. In fact, the National Pest Management Association estimates that termites cause over five billion dollars in damage each year, just in the United States. Subterranean termites are found throughout most of the country, and the "swarmers" may number in the thousands, typically emerging on warm spring days. Swarmers won't hurt you, but they can start new colonies,

which can cause damage to your property. You might also find just their wings after a swarm; this is the result of termite swarmers breaking off their wings prior to mating. If you see any swarms of insects, inside or outside, call our office. We'll be happy to schedule an inspection to ensure you peace of mind.

Detection and Control

Detecting and controlling termites is a job for a pest professional. A thorough inspection by a termite control specialist is the first and most



subterranean
termite swarmer

Formosan termite soldier



Termites (continued from page 1)

important step in protecting your property. “Experienced” eyes can locate signs in the specific areas in and around your structure where a termite attack is likely to occur. Check out the list below for possible signs of termite infestations:

Termite Signs

- Straw-sized diameter, or larger, mud tubes running across bare concrete or masonry between the soil and any wooden part of your building, inside or outside.
- Thin, small, papery wings, all the same size and shape, 3/8" to 1/2" long, on your window-

sill, countertop or floor (especially if it is late spring and there has been a recent rain).

- Thin “bubbled” or distorted areas of paint on wooden surfaces.
- Any wooden building parts (especially if they are support structures) that begin to sag unexpectedly.

If a termite infestation is found, a specialist can then design a treatment plan specific for your property that will control any current infestation and establish either a liquid treated zone, a baited zone or in some cases, both around the structure to take care of future termite infestations. ■

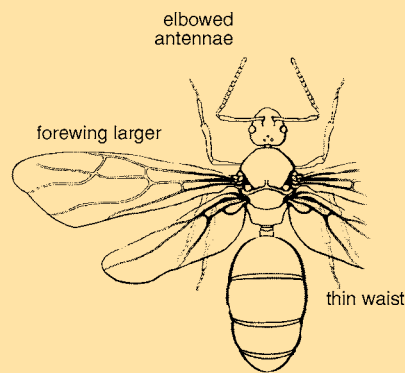


Termite swarms on a log.



Termite soldiers.

How to Tell Termites from Ants



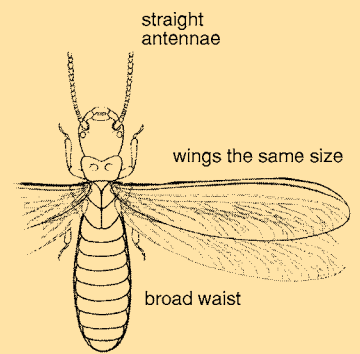
ANT

Ants swarm throughout the year depending upon the species.

The body of an ant will vary in size depending on the species.

Ants have four wings; two smaller and two larger and a pinched waist.

Ants have elbowed antennae and are good fliers.



TERMITE

Termites swarm at very limited times of the year.

The body of the termite swarmer is about 3/8" long.

Termites have four wings of equal size.

Termites have a straight waist as well as straight antennae.

Termites are clumsy fliers.

Invasive Pest Series: Ants

We read more and more about the introduction of new invasive species into our country. There is an agency that seeks to keep these invasions from occurring. It is called the Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service, or APHIS. They inspect incoming goods from abroad to keep unwanted pests out. However, despite their valiant efforts, new invasive species still find their way here. This explains the existence of such things as the noxious weed kudzu, fire ants, Africanized (killer) bees, Argentine and odorous house ants. These invasive species take hold in an area and typically do well, upsetting the ecological balance. They remove native species, since they typically have no or few predators, and soon they take over.

Raspberry Ant

One such invasive ant species recently in the news is the Raspberry ant, so named, not after the fruit, but instead, after the gentleman who discovered them. These ants were originally found spreading throughout Texas. The ant has quickly spread as far north as Louisiana and Mississippi within the last year, researchers from Sam Houston State University report. *(Photo: Tom Raspberry)*



Home Invading Ants

Native and non-native ants will invade your home in the spring and summer months. They are looking for food, water and shelter. Rains often flood them out of their normal soil living spaces and so they seek higher ground — usually in your home. Or perhaps there is a drought, and they seek moisture within your home. All of these ants are very invasive, have multiple queens in their colonies and can spread throughout your home rather rapidly without a professional's intervention. The typical home invading ants you may run into include the following: Odorous house ants, Argentine ants, and Pharaoh ants.

Odorous House Ants and Argentine Ants

Odorous house ants and Argentine ants have similar habits and in fact, are distantly related “cousins.” They are brown in color, a medium-sized ant, and when crushed, they give off a musty odor. They have huge colonies and these colonies contain multiple queens. This becomes an issue when they are disturbed, as a queen will take a few workers with her and set up shop in a new location to infest. Disturbances may be as minor as too much rain, but it can also be caused by you in an attempt to spray and kill the ants with your own products. Do not do this, as it will make your ant issue far worse! Instead, please call us and we will send a professional to employ measures that will solve your problem. These ants are finicky and spread rapidly. Even without a disturbance, research has shown that on their own initiative, they move an entire colony every 20 days or so. Let us come in, inspect and decide the best course of action to rid you of your ant infestation(s). Yes, you may have more than one co-existing in the same structure, a nightmare for any homeowner!



Argentine Ant



Pharaoh Ant

Pharaoh Ants

Pharaoh ants are smaller than those mentioned above. In fact, they are tiny by comparison, and are one of the few ants that are yellowish to light-brown in color. They love proteins, are good trailers, following one right after the other. But, they too will have multiple queens in their colonies and can spread if you try and treat this yourself. They mainly infest apartments, condo buildings, hotels, hospitals, and dorms. They will trail up and down pipe chases between units and from unit to unit laterally, following electrical conduits. Allow us to inspect and treat them accordingly. This ant almost always requires a pest professional's expertise. ■



Odorous House Ant

Post-Winter Home Inspection

! EXPERT TIP

In early spring, it is very important to perform a thorough exterior home inspection to help prevent pests throughout the summer months ahead.

Winter has come and gone and spring is here. April's rain showers will soon bring May flowers. But the rains may also bring other things too, pest problems! Moisture is one of the main ingredients needed for many pest invasions, such as termites or carpenter ants around your home. Post-winter exterior home inspections (and subsequent repairs) become very important in the early spring to help prevent these and other possible invaders throughout the summer months ahead. What should you look for when inspecting? Better yet, give us a call and let us do it for you, since we have the trained eyes and expertise!

Inspection Checklist

Follow this Checklist for a Proper Inspection of Areas Vulnerable to Pests:

- Broken downspouts and gutters — are they in need of repair?
- Ice dam areas that cause moisture and rotting wood — can they be repaired?
- Missing roof tiles or shingles — are they replaced/repaired?
- Misplaced splash blocks, or misdirected or turned-over splash blocks — are they righted?
- Leaking hose bibs — can they be replaced?
- Is there proper grading and drainage around your home to remove water?
- Is there any structural wood-to-soil contact, creating a pathway for termites?
- Firewood stacked and stored against the home's perimeter — can it be moved away or stored off the ground?
- Any vegetation touching the structure — is it trimmed back?
- Gaps around utility conduit openings — are they sealed?
- Screening on vents to the outside of the home — are they in place?
- Screens on windows — are they ripped or compromised in any way?
- Door sweeps and weather stripping on doors — are they secure and in place?
- Is the lighting around the home conducive to pests? Do you need yellow light bulbs that attract fewer insect pests, and thus spiders?
- Do you have chimney caps and are they in place to exclude large animals like raccoons?
- Louvers and venting in attic — are they secure/not compromised?
- Is your siding intact?
- Are your eaves intact? ■

