Beginner*

Camponotus semitestaceus

Brick carpenter ant

A big, brick-coloured carpenter ant from the dry pine and juniper hills of the western USA, with many large majors. A North American ant, not sold by Best Ants UK and possibly illegal or impossible to import to the UK.

ORIGIN
Western USA, northern Mexico
Dry pinyon-juniper woodland; nests in soil and under stones

NEST TEMPERATURE
24–28°C
Advanced Heating System Small at 24°C, under a quarter of the nest

OUTWORLD TEMPERATURE
18°C night, up to 28°C day
By day like the nest or a degree or two cooler

HUMIDITY
Nest 55–65%
Outworld about 50%, never watered

WINTER
Cool rest 3–4 months
8–12°C in a hibernation unit with precise control. No rest in a queen's first year

MOVE TO A NEST
3+ workers
5+ is better

SIZE
Queen 16–18 mm
Workers 7–11 mm, majors up to 16 mm

COLONY
One queen
Slow first year, then around 2,000 workers

Food

- **Proteins:** Cricket Mash (the more efficient protein for carpenter ants) or Protein Jelly (keep it in the fridge)
- **Carbohydrates:** organic Ant Honey or Ant Nectar, far better than sugar water or home-made mixes
- Twice a week, small amounts, outworld only, on tin foil or a feeding dish; leftovers out after 2 days. Founding queen: a tiny drop of protein jelly on tin foil once a week. Small

colonies don't need live insects

- Buy food only from established ant-keeping suppliers: bird seed, dried mealworms and pet-shop live food often carry blood-sucking mites

Water

- Distilled or purified water only, never tap, rain or mineral water, even boiled
- Pipette a few drops at a time through the watering hole and stop when 1 or 2 drops appear inside; water when the meter drops below 55%
- Never open water: a watering test tube in the outworld, never a water dispenser; never water the outworld

Best setup

- Carpenter Ant Farm Starter Kit (nest with humidity and temperature meter) or A7 Plus with its pre-installed digital meter
- Daylight, never direct sunlight; away from windows, radiators, vibration, speakers and kitchens. Test tube warmth: a heating cable at the cotton stopper end only, never a heat mat
- Escape risk: big, strong climbers. PTFE Fluon band around the top inner edge of the outworld lid, reapplied about every 4 weeks (every 2 weeks for 300+ ants)

Good to know

- Most carpenter queens eat their eggs in transit: normal for Camponotus, she lays again within 2–3 months
- On arrival: parcel unopened for 5 hours, then 4–5 days of complete rest in its packaging
- No sting, but majors can nip and spray formic acid. Never handle them, never a fridge, shed or garage

Read the full care guide | **All our ant care sheets**

Best Ants UK care sheet. These notes cover the essentials only: read the full care guide and our ant farm setup guide from A to Z.