Pheidole sinica

Giant Asian Big-Headed Ant | Care Sheet

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KEEPING LEVEL	ORIGIN	NEST TEMPERATURE	NEST HUMIDITY	WORKERS BEFORE NEST
🎓 Intermediate	🌍 China	🌡️ 24–28°C	💧 60–70%	🏠 30+

🐜 At a glance

Origin	🌏 China — open land, woodland and wood margins
Keeping level	Intermediate — aggressive raiders and escape artists. Small sting; majors bite hard
Queen	Around 13mm
Workers	4.5–5mm minors; 8–10mm majors with huge heads
Founding	Claustral — the queen raises her first workers alone
Colony form	Single queen (monogyne)
Nest temperature	24–28°C (outworld 21–30°C)
Nest humidity	60–70% in the nest; outworld 50–60%
Workers before moving into a nest	30+ minimum, 50+ recommended
Winter	No hibernation needed — see below

📖 About this species

The largest Pheidole in Asia, with majors twice the size of those of Pheidole noda. These are bold raiders that hunt and swarm their opponents, and they eat a lot once the colony grows. They are excellent escape artists, so a fresh PTFE band is essential. Good ventilation matters too.

📦 When your ants arrive

- ⚠️ **MOST IMPORTANT:** leave the parcel completely unopened, exactly as it arrived, at room temperature for **5 hours**. The ants must adjust to your home's temperature gradually — abrupt temperature changes make ants seriously unwell.
- After the 5 hours, check the queen is safe and sound, then leave the colony in its original packaging (test tube still in its tin foil and wrapping) in a quiet spot — in daylight, never direct sunlight — away from vibration and daily household activity.
- 😴 Give the colony **4 to 5 days** of complete rest. The ants were fed before dispatch and need nothing from you during this time. Assemble and water the nest while you wait.
- Still workers or a motionless queen after delivery are almost always delivery stress. Check the antennae: moving antennae means she is fine. Almost all recover within 4 to 5 days (a little longer for bigger queens).
- Do not remove the black divider inside the test tube (between the two cotton stoppers) — it keeps the ants safe in transit. It has a hole, and the queen and all workers pass through it without any issue.
- 👑 A queen on her own: keep her test tube wrapped in its tin foil, undisturbed, and feed her once a week — a tiny drop of protein jelly, about half a grain of rice, on a small flat piece of tin foil placed inside the tube next to the dry cotton stopper. In our experience a fed queen is stronger and her brood develops about 30% faster.

🏠 Moving into the ant farm

- Keep the colony in its test tube until it has **at least 30 workers — 50 or more is even better**. The workers are tiny, and a small group cannot care for the queen and brood in a larger space. The same 30+ rule applies to a queen bought on her own.
- Connect the test tube to the nest with the delivery tin foil still on and leave it for 14 days. Then slide the foil back about 1mm every day until the tube is fully exposed to daylight.
- If the ants have not moved in 2 days after the tube is fully exposed, wrap the foil back on, wait another fortnight and repeat the whole process — patience is the key. Moving in happens on the ants' own time: anywhere from a couple of days to 6 months.
- The red filter and black cover stay on the nest at all times — it is pitch dark inside. The black cover can come off once a day for 2 to 3 minutes (ideally at night); the red filter once a week for 2 to 3 minutes.
- ☀️ Place the ant farm in normal daylight, never direct sunlight (the sun can overheat a nest within minutes). Avoid windows, radiators and heaters, vibrating surfaces, speakers and TVs, strong smells such as the kitchen, and busy walkways. Keep a steady room temperature.

🍯 Feeding

- 🍯 Sugars for worker energy: our organic ant honey (lab-tested at 81% carbohydrate) or Best Ants UK Ant Nectar (90% dextrose, an even richer energy source) — never sugar water or home-made mixes.

- 🥩 Protein for the queen and brood: Best Ants UK Protein Jelly or NextSwarm Cricket Mash. Keep protein jelly in the fridge at all times once opened.
- 🌾 They also enjoy the occasional small seed — a few sesame, chia or millet seeds now and then.
- Feed twice a week, small amounts, in the outworld only. Remove leftovers after 2 days to prevent mould.
- 🦗 Live food (mealworms, crickets, locusts) is only for established colonies, never small ones. All bought live food carries tiny mites that can destroy a colony, so always scald it first: hold it with tweezers in just-boiled water (no longer bubbling) for 10 to 15 seconds, then chop it in half and serve on a small tin foil tray.

💧 Watering the nest

- 💧 Use **distilled or purified water only** — never tap, rainwater or bottled mineral water, even boiled. They carry minerals and microbes that turn a nest green with mould. A litre of distilled water costs a few pounds and lasts over a year.
- Water the nest with the pipette provided: pour slowly, a few drops at a time, through the watering hole, and stop as soon as 1 or 2 drops appear inside the nest — that is how you know it is done correctly. More than that is too much.
- Once a week is usually right — slightly more in summer, less in winter. Never water the outworld.

🌡️ Temperature and winter

- 🌴 No hibernation. Pheidole sinica comes from a warm climate and must stay at 24–28°C all year round — in a UK home this means gentle heating in the cooler months.
- Use the Advanced Heating System Small 4W warming no more than a quarter of the nest, on the side opposite the water inlet, so the ants can choose their temperature. For a colony still in its test tube, use the Heating Mat with Thermostat Small 4W and heat only about 25mm of the tube, at the end opposite the water — never lay the whole tube on the mat.
- Never let the colony get cold, and never expose it to abrupt temperature changes.

🤩 Did you know?

- Its majors are almost as big as the queen's head — among the most impressive soldiers of any Pheidole.
- Keepers often compare it with marauder ants because of its size, colour and fierce hunting style.

⭐ Golden rules | Never break these

- 🚫 Never put ants in a fridge, and never expose them to abrupt temperature changes. Cold does not kill a colony instantly — the ants get sick and die over the following days — and prolonged cold near freezing damages the sperm a queen stores from her nuptial flight, so she may never lay fertile eggs again.
- 🚫 Never use gel ant farms, Ytong or concrete nests, or DIY nests.
- 🚫 Never use tap, rain or mineral water, even boiled.
- 🚫 Never move a colony into a nest too early, and never tip or shake ants out of their tube.
- 🚫 Never disturb the colony with tapping or handling — vibration stresses the queen and she can stop laying or eat her eggs.
- ☀️ Never keep the farm in the dark: ants need daylight for their circadian rhythm. Daylight yes — direct sunlight never.
- 🧱 Escape artists: keep a fresh PTFE band around the top inner edge of the outworld lid at all times, and never leave the lid open.
- 🚫 Never release this species into the wild — a colony raised in an ant farm would not survive. If you can no longer keep it, visit our ants adoption page and ask us whether we can adopt it.

🛒 Recommended for this species

Pheidole sinica colonies | **A7 Plus Ant Farm Kit** | **Advanced Heating System 4W**

PTFE Escape Barrier | **Protein Jelly** | **Cricket Mash** | **Organic Honey** | **Ant Nectar**

📚 These care notes cover the essentials only. Please read the full ant farm setup guide and our Pheidole noda care guide (same genus, same care basics) from A to Z — we recommend printing both for a successful ant-keeping experience. Questions? Message us through our contact form — we are always happy to help. 💚

Written and reviewed by the Best Ants UK team, keeping ants since 1997.