Beginner to intermediate

Veromessor pergandei

Black desert harvester ant

A glossy black desert seed harvester that forages in long columns and stores seeds in deep granaries. A North American ant, not sold by Best Ants UK and possibly illegal or impossible to import to the UK.

ORIGIN
Mojave, Sonoran and Colorado deserts
South-western USA and north-west Mexico, sandy ground

NEST TEMPERATURE
26–30°C
Advanced Heating System Small at 28°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
Gradient: seeds 10–30%, brood corner 50–70%
Never hydrate the whole nest. Outworld about 50%, never watered

WINTER
No hibernation
May slow down; never below 15°C, no rest in a queen's first year

MOVE TO A NEST
10+ workers
15–20 is better, a lone queen too

SIZE
Queen about 10–12 mm
Workers about 2.5–6 mm, glossy black, minors to majors

COLONY
One or several queens
Tens of thousands of workers when mature

Food

- **Seeds:** our harvester seed mix is the main food, on tin foil or a feeding dish, never on the substrate (sprouted seeds are harmful)

- **Proteins:** Protein Jelly once a week, for example every Monday (keep it in the fridge)
- **Carbohydrates:** organic Ant Honey or Ant Nectar once a week on another day, for example every Thursday (they often take little sugar); far better than sugar water
- Feed in the outworld only and remove leftover jelly and honey after 2 days. Founding queen: a tiny drop of protein jelly on tin foil once a week
- 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 drop at a time through the watering hole: no more than 1 drop should leak into the nest; water the brood corner only, never the whole nest
- Never open water (they can drown): a watering test tube in the outworld, never a water dispenser; never water the outworld

Best setup

- Angie or A7 Plus ant farm, both with a 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
- Escape risk: thousands of busy foragers. 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

- Rarely stings and is not a danger to people; may give a small bite. Never handle them
- On arrival: parcel unopened for 5 hours, then 4–5 days of complete rest in its packaging
- New queens fly from February to April, timed by day length rather than rain

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.