Advanced | adults only

Pogonomyrmex bicolor

Bicoloured harvester ant

A two-tone desert harvester with a rusty red front half and a dark gaster. A North American ant with a very painful sting, not sold by Best Ants UK and possibly illegal or impossible to import to the UK.

ORIGIN
Sonoran Desert, Arizona and north-west Mexico
Open gravelly desert between shrubs and cacti

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
Nest 50–60%
Outworld about 50%, never watered

WINTER
2–3 month rest at 17–18°C
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 9–11 mm
Workers 5–8 mm (up to 9.5 mm), no soldiers

COLONY
One queen
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; 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 when the meter drops below 50%
- 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
- Escape risk: PTFE Fluon band around the top inner edge of the outworld lid, reapplied about every 4 weeks (every 2 weeks for 300+ ants); keep the lid closed

Good to know

- Very painful sting that can cause allergic reactions: adults only, never handle, use long tweezers
- On arrival: parcel unopened for 5 hours, then 4–5 days of complete rest in its packaging
- When disturbed, workers freeze in a jaws-open threat pose for up to 15 minutes. Less studied than its cousins.

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.