BEST ANTS UK | ANT CARE SHEET

Keeping ants since 1997

Advanced | adults only

Pogonomyrmex barbatus

Red harvester ant

> A rusty red desert harvester that clears a bare patch around its nest and stores seeds in underground granaries. 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

South-western USA and northern Mexico

Deserts, semi-desert and dry grassland

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 9–12 mm

Workers 5–9.5 mm, red to dark brown

COLONY

One queen

Up to about 15,000 workers

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
- Often mistaken for fire ants, but not closely related. New queens fly in July and August after summer 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.