Odontomachus monticola

Trap-Jaw Ant | Care Sheet

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KEEPING LEVEL	ORIGIN	NEST TEMPERATURE	NEST HUMIDITY	WORKERS BEFORE NEST
Advanced	South & East Asia	24–28°C	60–75%	10+

🐜 At a glance

Origin	🌏 South and East Asia — India, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia
Keeping level	Advanced — fast, alert hunters with a powerful sting
Queen	Slightly larger than the workers, dark reddish brown
Workers	Around 10–12mm, reddish brown to black, with long straight trap jaws
Colony form	Usually a single queen
Founding	Semi-claustral — the queen hunts for her first brood
Mature colony	A few hundred workers
Nest temperature	24–28°C
Nest humidity	60–75%
Workers before moving into a nest	10+
Winter	No hibernation — keep warm all year

📖 About this species

Trap-jaw ants lock their long mandibles open at 180 degrees and snap them shut in a fraction of a millisecond — one of the fastest movements in the animal kingdom. They use it to grab prey, and can even snap against the ground to launch themselves out of danger. Odontomachus monticola hunts termites and small insects in the wild and is a spectacular display species for experienced keepers.

> ⚠️ **Sting: a strong, painful sting that can itch for a long time. They are not aggressive, but this is an adults-only species — never handle the ants, use long tweezers.**

📦 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).
- 👑 Start with a colony, never a lone queen or a single worker: choose at least 10 workers with eggs, larvae or pupae laid inside that colony (not added from elsewhere) — that is your proof of a fertile

egg-layer. The egg-layer often looks almost identical to the workers, so the brood is the only reliable sign for most keepers. The more workers, the better your chance of success.

🏠 Moving into the ant farm

- Keep the colony in its test tube until it has at least 10 workers. Moved earlier, the workers often abandon the queen in the larger space, which can lead to colony failure.
- 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

- 🦗 **Live prey is the heart of this species' diet** — it is a true hunter and will not thrive on jelly alone. Offer small live crickets, flightless fruit flies or small cockroach nymphs such as our Red Runner Roaches — 2 to 3 times a week, in the outworld only, sized so a single worker can overpower it.
- 🔍 Buy live food only from a clean, trusted breeder and check it for mites before it goes in — mites can destroy a colony, starting with the queen. Larger prey the ants accept pre-killed (mealworms, crickets, locusts) should be scalded first: hold it with tweezers in just-boiled water (no longer bubbling) for 10 to 15 seconds, chop it in half and serve on a small tin foil tray.
- 🥩 NextSwarm Cricket Mash is a useful protein top-up between hunts. A small drop of organic honey or Ant Nectar once or twice a week gives the workers energy.
- 🧹 Remove leftovers and uneaten prey after 2 days to prevent mould. A springtail clean-up crew in the outworld helps keep things tidy.

💧 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. Odontomachus monticola 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.

⭐ 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.
- 🚫 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.
- 📟 Choose a nest with a pre-installed humidity and temperature meter (our A5 M PLA or A4-2 Smart Meter) — humidity is impossible to check any other way, and it matters most for these species.
- 🧤 Never handle these ants or let children handle the setup — always use long tweezers and keep the lid closed and the PTFE band fresh.

🛒 Recommended for this species

- Odontomachus monticola colony
- A5 M PLA Ant Farm with Meter
- PTFE Escape Barrier
- Advanced Heating System 4W
- Test Tube Heating Mat 4W
- Red Runner Roaches
- Cricket Mash
- Organic Honey

📚 These care notes cover the essentials only. Please read the full ant farm setup guide and our Odontomachus monticola care guide from A to Z. Questions? Message us through our contact form and we will be happy to help. 💚

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