BEST ANTS UK | ANT CARE SHEET

Keeping ants since 1997

Advanced | adults only

Pogonomyrmex occidentalis

Western harvester ant

> A harvester that builds a gravel-covered cone nest with a bare circle of ground around it. 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

Western USA, northern Mexico, southern Canada

Grassland, sagebrush and open woodland

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 12–14 mm

Workers 6.5–10 mm, yellowish to reddish-brown

COLONY

One queen

Up to about 8,000 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
- Some mounds stay in use for over 40 years. The workers are very defensive. New queens fly in July and August.

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.