

Ants in Your Home

Why we care

When cold, rainy weather hits, ants often enter homes in search of food. They aren't harmful, but they are a nuisance. Pesticides can kill ants, but they may also include ingredients such as neurotoxins and possible carcinogens. When pesticides are sprayed, they are easily inhaled. Foggers can leave residue throughout your home, and outdoor sprays to prevent entry can drift and pose a risk to wildlife such as bees and other beneficial insects.

Simple, positive steps

- Clean surfaces with a soapy sponge. The soap will kill live ants and wash away the chemical markers they use as guides.
- Limit eating to one area and clean up spills immediately. Even drips of juice or jelly on the counter are enough to attract ants.
- Store sweets in glass jars with tightly sealed lids or sealed plastic bags. Keep food scraps in a sealed container or in the fridge. Place a pie tin of soapy water under pet food dishes.
- Seal possible entry points both inside and out (gaps between baseboards and floors, window frames and walls, and around cables and plumbing) with silicone caulk. Use weather stripping around doors and windows.
- Outdoors remove debris and prune branches six inches from the house. Repair leaky faucets and clean gutters.
- As a last resort, purchase bait with borates as the active ingredient. Or you can [make your own borax bait trap](#). Re-supply the bait stations until you no longer see ant activity.
- For specific questions, contact Metro at askmetro@oregonmetro.gov.

Note: this eco-tip does not apply to carpenter ants.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@ecoschoolnetwork.org.