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CANADA FIELD GUIDE

The Ant Nuptial Flight Calendar



When queen ants take to the sky — a month-by-month guide to catching queens across Canada.

A free field companion for
ant keepers & queen hunters

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The 6 Rules of Queen Hunting

A nuptial flight is the day a colony sends its winged queens and males into the air to mate.

Canada's season is short and sharp — miss the weather window and you wait a full year. These six rules decide whether you come home with a queen.

1 Respect the short season

Canada's flights run roughly **late April to October**, with most action from May to September. Everything lands **later than the northern-US charts**, so trust Canadian timing, not American.

2 Wait for warmth

Most flights need warm afternoons of about **20–30 °C** — *Camponotus herculeanus*, for example, flies around 25 °C. A cool, grey day keeps the colonies underground.

3 Chase the rain

The classic trigger is the **first warm, humid day after a good rain**. Softened soil lets new queens dig in, and the humidity protects them in the air.

4 Know the clock

Timing is species-specific: many *Camponotus* and *Lasius* fly from **afternoon into dusk**; pavement and harvester ants favour the afternoon and evening. Each month's table tells you.

5 Coastal & south fly first

Coastal BC and the southern belt — southern Ontario and Quebec — warm earliest. The **Prairies, the North and the Maritimes** follow by days or weeks.

6 Circle the Labour Day weekend

The year's biggest flight — the huge *Lasius neoniger* swarms — clusters around **late August and September**, often near the Labour Day long weekend. That's the finale.

How to read this book: Each month lists the species most likely to fly, their peak window, the weather trigger to watch, and a catch-difficulty rating (★ easy → ★★★ tricky). A de-winged queen walking on the ground has already mated and is ready to found a colony — she is the one you want.

January – March

DEEP WINTER

the long off-season

Snow and frozen ground mean no flights anywhere in Canada. The hunting season is months away — but this is when good keepers get ready.

WHAT'S HAPPENING	STATUS	WINDOW	NOTES	CATCH
No nuptial flights <i>All species hibernating</i>	CLOSED	Jan – Mar	Frozen ground; colonies in deep diapause	—

KEEPER'S NOTE Your established colonies should be resting cool right now (see the December note). Use these months to clean and prepare test tubes and outworlds. The first flights of the year — the winter ant and, out west, boreal carpenter ants — begin as the thaw arrives in April.

April

FIRST THAW
the season opens

The very first flights of the Canadian year. As the snow clears in the south and west, the earliest risers test the air on the first genuinely warm afternoons.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Winter Ant <i>Prenolepis imparis</i>	ACTIVE	Apr–May (S. Canada)	Warm 12–18 °C afternoons after a thaw	★★
Boreal Carpenter Ant <i>Camponotus herculeanus</i>	EARLY	Late Apr (warm West)	Warm, still afternoons ~25 °C	★

KEEPER'S NOTE *Prenolepis imparis*, the "winter ant," is the true opener — it flies on the first mild spring days, often before the trees are in leaf, mainly in southern Ontario, Quebec and coastal BC. Watch the forecast for that first warm, calm afternoon.

May

SPRING

the boreal carpenter month

Spring proper. In the boreal west and north, the big mountain carpenter ants take flight — one of Canada's signature early-season catches — while the field ants begin.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Boreal Carpenter Ant <i>Camponotus herculeanus</i>	PEAK	Peak May (boreal/West)	Warm, still afternoons ~25 °C, often after rain	★
Winter Ant <i>Prenolepis imparis</i>	ACTIVE	Tail of Apr–May	Warm afternoons	★★
Wood & Field Ants <i>Formica</i> spp.	EARLY	Building to Jul peak	Warm, sunny, still afternoons	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE *Camponotus herculeanus* is a hardy, cold-adapted giant — a prize for Prairie, boreal and northern keepers. It is fully claustral and beginner-friendly. Alberta keepers regularly record flights in late May on warm ~25 °C afternoons.

June

EARLY SUMMER
southern carpenter ants

The southern belt catches up. In Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes the black and New York carpenter ants take flight, pavement ants swarm in the cities, and the field ants build.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Black & NY Carpenter Ants <i>Camponotus pennsylvanicus</i> & <i>novaeboracensis</i>	PEAK	Peak June (S. Canada)	Warm, humid evenings after rain	★
Pavement Ant <i>Tetramorium immigrans</i>	ACTIVE	Jun–Jul (urban)	Warm evenings; synchronized swarms	★
Wood & Field Ants <i>Formica spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Building to Jul peak	Warm, sunny, still afternoons	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE Southern Ontario keepers catch *Camponotus pennsylvanicus* and *novaeboracensis* through mid-to-late June — big, hardy, fully claustral carpenter ants and an ideal first colony. Check porch lights, walls and pavements at dusk after a warm rain.

July

MIDSUMMER
the peak of variety

The busiest, most varied month. Field ants peak, pavement ants crest, woodland and acrobat ants join in, and on the southern Prairies the harvester ants fly after summer storms.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Wood & Field Ants <i>Formica</i> spp.	PEAK	Peak July	Warm, sunny, still afternoons	★★
Pavement Ant <i>Tetramorium immigrans</i>	PEAK	Peak July (urban)	Warm evenings; synchronized swarms	★
Woodland Ants <i>Aphaenogaster</i> spp.	ACTIVE	Jul–Sep	Warm, humid afternoons after rain	★★
Harvester Ant (Prairies) <i>Pogonomyrmex occidentalis</i>	ACTIVE	Jul–Aug (AB/SK)	Afternoon after summer storms	★★
Acrobat Ant <i>Crematogaster cerasi</i>	EARLY	Building to Aug peak	Warm, humid days after rain	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE On the southern Prairie grasslands of Alberta and Saskatchewan, *Pogonomyrmex occidentalis* is Canada's only true harvester ant — a distinctive regional catch that flies in the afternoon heat after a summer thunderstorm.

August

LATE SUMMER
the build to the finale

The woodland and acrobat ants peak, the red ants get going, and — most importantly — the enormous *Lasius neoniger* flights begin to build towards the year's grand finale.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Woodland Ants <i>Aphaenogaster</i> spp.	PEAK	Peak August	Warm, humid afternoons after rain	★★
Acrobat Ant <i>Crematogaster cerasi</i>	PEAK	Peak August	Warm, humid days after rain	★★
Cornfield Ant <i>Lasius neoniger</i>	ACTIVE	Building to Sep peak	Warm, humid, still afternoons after rain	★★
Red Ants <i>Myrmica</i> spp.	ACTIVE	Aug–Sep	Warm, humid afternoons	★★
Parasitic Yellow Ants <i>Lasius umbratus</i> & <i>claviger</i>	EARLY	Building to Sep	Warm, humid late-summer days	★★★

KEEPER'S NOTE Watch the humidity late in the month. A muggy, still afternoon after August rain is the classic setup for the first big *Lasius neoniger* flights — the front edge of Canada's grandest ant event.

September

EARLY FALL
★ the *Lasius* finale ★

The headline event of the Canadian ant year. Around the Labour Day weekend, warm, humid afternoons unleash the massive, synchronized *Lasius neoniger* flights — queens by the thousands.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Cornfield Ant <i>Lasius neoniger</i>	PEAK	Peak early Sep (Labour Day)	Warm, humid, still afternoon after rain	★★
Red Ants <i>Myrmica</i> spp.	PEAK	Peak September	Warm, humid afternoons	★★
Parasitic Yellow Ants <i>Lasius umbratus</i> & <i>claviger</i>	PEAK	Sep–Oct	Warm, still, humid days	★★★
Woodland Ants <i>Aphaenogaster</i> spp.	ACTIVE	Tail of season	Warm, humid afternoons	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE Circle the first warm, humid afternoon around Labour Day. *Lasius neoniger* queens pour out in huge numbers and are fully claustral — an excellent, hardy beginner species. Advanced keepers use this same window to find parasitic *Lasius* queens for social-parasite colonies.

October

MID FALL
the season closes

The last flights of the year. In the mild south, stray *Lasius* and red ants finish up on the final warm afternoons — then Canada's flight season shuts down until spring.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Parasitic Yellow Ants <i>Lasius umbratus & claviger</i>	ACTIVE	Into early Oct	Last warm, still afternoons	★★★
Cornfield Ant <i>Lasius neoniger</i>	ACTIVE	Last waves (mild south)	Warm, humid afternoons	★★
Red Ants <i>Myrmica spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Last stragglers	Mild, humid afternoons	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE Don't quit at the first frost warning — a warm October spell in the south can pull one last flight out of the fall species. But once the cold locks in, the season is done until next April.

November & December

WINTER
the off-season

The hunting year is over and the long Canadian winter sets in. These months are for hibernation and planning — the most important thing you can do for next year's colonies.

WHAT'S HAPPENING	STATUS	WINDOW	NOTES	CATCH
No nuptial flights <i>Colonies in hibernation</i>	CLOSED	Nov – Dec	Frozen ground; overwinter your colonies	—

KEEPER'S NOTE Canada's winters demand a **LONG, GENUINE HIBERNATION**. Native species (Camponotus, Lasius, Formica, Myrmica) need a cool **2–8 °C** rest — a fridge, cold room or unheated basement — for roughly **3–5 MONTHS**. It is essential, not optional. Then watch for the winter ant and boreal carpenters as the thaw returns in April.

PULL-OUT REFERENCE

The Canadian Year at a Glance

Every major Canadian keeper species and its flight window on one page. **Dark = peak**, gold = active, pale = early/tail. Coastal BC and the south fly earliest; the Prairies, North and Maritimes run later.

SPECIES	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Winter Ant <i>Prenolepis imparis</i>				Dark	Gold							
Boreal Carpenter Ant <i>Camponotus herculeanus</i>				Light	Dark	Gold						
Black & NY Carpenter Ants <i>Camponotus pennsylvanicus & novaeboracensis</i>					Light	Dark	Gold					
Wood & Field Ants <i>Formica spp.</i>					Light	Gold	Dark	Gold				
Pavement Ant <i>Tetramorium immigrans</i>						Gold	Dark					
Harvester Ant (Prairies) <i>Pogonomyrmex occidentalis</i>							Gold	Gold				
Woodland Ants <i>Aphaenogaster spp.</i>							Gold	Dark	Gold			
Acrobat Ant <i>Crematogaster cerasi</i>							Light	Dark	Gold			
Cornfield Ant <i>Lasius neoniger</i>							Light	Gold	Dark	Gold		
Red Ants <i>Myrmica spp.</i>							Light	Gold	Dark	Gold		
Parasitic Yellow Ants <i>L. umbratus & claviger</i>								Light	Dark	Gold		

Dark = Peak flight Gold = Active Light = Early / tail Windows are national averages — always trust your local weather.

THE PAYOFF

You Caught a Queen — Now What?

A de-winged queen walking on the ground has already mated. Here's how to bring her home and start your first colony the right way.

1

Confirm she's a mated queen

Look for a larger ant with a bulky thorax and **no wings** (or wing stubs). Wingless and walking = mated and ready. Still winged = she may not have flown yet.

2

Collect her gently

Coax her into a small container — never squeeze. A clean pill bottle or tube works. During a big *Lasius neoniger* flight you can gather dozens in minutes.

3

Prepare a test-tube setup

Quarter-fill a test tube with water, plug it with a tight cotton ball to trap a reservoir, add the queen, and stopper the open end with a second cotton ball.

4

Dark, warm, undisturbed

Keep the tube in a drawer at room temperature (around 20–24 °C). **Don't keep checking her** — stress is the number-one killer of founding queens. A glance once a week is plenty.

5

Know if she needs feeding

Fully claustral queens (*Camponotus*, *Lasius*, *Prenolepis*) raise the first workers on their own reserves — **don't feed them**. Semi-claustral queens (*Pogonomyrmex*, *Myrmica*) need small amounts of food. Parasitic *Lasius* and *Formica rufa*-group queens need a host colony (advanced).

6

Wait for nanitics — then overwinter

She'll raise her first tiny workers ("nanitics") over a few weeks. Queens caught late may need to overwinter before producing workers — Canadian species require a genuine cold hibernation each winter to thrive.

One queen, one rule: patience. The keepers who lose queens are almost always the ones who open the tube too often. Note your catch date and species — then leave her be and let nature do the work.

TRACK EVERY FLIGHT IN REAL TIME

Never miss a nuptial flight again.

This calendar tells you *when* to look. **ColonyCue** tells you when it's happening *right now* — tuned to your corner of Canada — and helps you raise every queen you catch.

- Local flight alerts tuned to your province & weather
- Log your queens and track founding progress
- Care sheets for *Camponotus*, *Lasius*, *Myrmica* & more
- Free keeper playbooks & guides from AntAddict

Start free at colonycue.app →