

ANTADDICT.COM

2026 EDITION



UNITED KINGDOM FIELD GUIDE

The Ant Nuptial Flight Calendar



*Flying Ant Day and beyond — a month-by-month guide to
catching queen ants across Britain.*

A free field companion for
ant keepers & queen hunters

Powered by ColonyCue
antaddict.com

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 — in Britain, the famous "Flying Ant Day." Get the weather right and you can catch dozens of queens in an afternoon. Get it wrong and you miss the season.

1 Wait for real heat

British ants stay grounded until it is genuinely warm. Most flights need **24 °C+** (about 75 °F), ideally around **26 °C**. A cool, grey day keeps them underground.

2 Pick a muggy, still day

High humidity and low wind are essential — ideally winds below **6 m/s**. The classic trigger is a warm, close, sticky afternoon, often a day or two after summer rain.

3 Think July

Around **90% of UK flights happen in July**. Flying Ant Day is the peak of the year for *Lasius niger* — but the wider season runs June to September, so keep watching.

4 Watch the afternoon & evening

Lasius niger typically pours out from **late afternoon into the evening** on hot days. Check pavements, patios and walls, then again the next morning for walking, de-winged queens.

5 Cities fly first

The **urban heat-island effect** means towns and cities regularly swarm days ahead of the surrounding countryside. If you live rurally, watch the nearest big town's sightings.

6 The south leads

Southern England warms first and flies earliest; the Midlands, the north and Scotland follow by **days or weeks**. Your own local weather is always the final word.

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 – April

WINTER & EARLY SPRING

the quiet season

Britain is simply too cold for nuptial flights through the winter and early spring. No queens fly — but this is the season that sets up the whole year.

WHAT'S HAPPENING	STATUS	WINDOW	NOTES	CATCH
No nuptial flights <i>All species dormant / hibernating</i>	CLOSED	Jan – Apr	Ground temperatures far too low for flights	—

KEEPER'S NOTE Use these months to prepare. Overwinter your existing colonies cool (see the December note), then in early spring clean and set up test tubes and outworlds ready for the summer. The first flights are still months away — the earliest is usually the wood ants in May.

May

LATE SPRING
the season opens

The first flights of the British year. As the ground finally warms, the wood and field ants begin — the curtain-raiser before the summer's big *Lasius* flights.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Wood & Field Ants <i>Formica</i> spp.	ACTIVE	May–Jul, peak Jun	Warm, sunny, still afternoons	★★
Silky Ant <i>Formica fusca</i>	ACTIVE	May–Jul	Warm afternoons after mild rain	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE A vital distinction: *Formica fusca* and its relatives found colonies alone (fully claustral) and are catchable. But the true wood ants of the *Formica rufa* group are **TEMPORARY SOCIAL PARASITES** — their queens cannot start a colony without a host and are for advanced keepers only.

June

EARLY SUMMER
the build-up

The season broadens. *Formica* peaks, pavement ants swarm in the warm south, and on the first properly hot, humid days the earliest *Lasius niger* "pre-flights" can appear.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Wood & Field Ants <i>Formica</i> spp.	PEAK	Peak June	Warm, sunny, still afternoons	★★
Pavement Ant <i>Tetramorium caespitum</i>	ACTIVE	Jun–Jul (S. England)	Warm evenings after rain	★★
Jet Black Ant <i>Lasius fuliginosus</i>	EARLY	Jun–Aug	Warm, humid afternoons	★★★
Brown Tree Ant <i>Lasius brunneus</i>	ACTIVE	Jun–Jul (S. England)	Warm afternoons	★★★
Black Garden Ant <i>Lasius niger</i>	EARLY	Hot-spell pre-flights	First 24 °C+ humid days	★

KEEPER'S NOTE In hot years — and 2026's early heatwaves are a good example — the odd *Lasius niger* colony jumps the gun with a small June flight, especially in cities. Treat these as a warning shot: the main event is only weeks away.

The headline event of the British ant year. On the right hot, humid day, millions of *Lasius niger* queens and males take to the air at once — the famous Flying Ant Day.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Black Garden Ant <i>Lasius niger</i>	PEAK	Peak mid–late July	Hot (24 °C+), humid, still; afternoon → evening	★
Yellow Meadow Ant <i>Lasius flavus</i>	ACTIVE	Jul–Sep	Warm, humid days after rain	★
Acorn Ants <i>Temnothorax spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Jul–Aug	Warm, humid afternoons	★★★
Pavement Ant <i>Tetramorium caespitum</i>	ACTIVE	Tail of flights	Warm evenings	★★
Red Ants <i>Myrmica ruginodis</i>	EARLY	Building to Aug–Sep	Warm, humid afternoons	★★

FLYING ANT DAY, EXPLAINED It is not really one national "day." Each colony flies when its local weather aligns — so swarms roll across the country over roughly two weeks, cities first. Around 90% of UK flights fall in July. *Lasius niger* is the beginner's dream: huge numbers, easy to catch, and fully claustral.

August

LATE SUMMER

second waves & yellow meadows

The *Lasius niger* flights roll on in the north, the yellow meadow ants hit their peak in the late-summer heat, and the red ants begin their own season.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Yellow Meadow Ant <i>Lasius flavus</i>	PEAK	Peak August	Warm, humid days after rain	★
Black Garden Ant <i>Lasius niger</i>	ACTIVE	Second waves; north later	Hot, humid, still days	★
Red Ants <i>Myrmica rubra & ruginodis</i>	ACTIVE	Aug–Sep	Warm, humid afternoons	★★
Jet Black Ant <i>Lasius fuliginosus</i>	ACTIVE	Tail of Jun–Aug	Warm, humid afternoons	★★★
Parasitic Yellow Ants <i>Lasius umbratus</i>	EARLY	Building to Sep	Warm, humid late-summer days	★★★

KEEPER'S NOTE *Lasius flavus* queens are golden, plump and, like *niger*, fully claustral — an excellent, hardy beginner species. They often fly on the same muggy August afternoons as the second wave of black garden ants, so a single outing can land you both.

September

EARLY AUTUMN
red ants & parasites

The season shifts to the red ants and the specialist autumn flyers. This is when the parasitic yellow *Lasius* take wing — the prize of advanced British keepers.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Red Ants <i>Myrmica rubra</i> & allies	PEAK	Peak September	Warm, humid afternoons	★★
Parasitic Yellow Ants <i>Lasius umbratus</i> & <i>mixtus</i>	PEAK	Sep–Oct	Warm, still, humid days	★★★
Yellow Meadow Ant <i>Lasius flavus</i>	ACTIVE	Tail of season	Warm, humid days	★

KEEPER'S NOTE *Lasius umbratus* and *mixtus* are beautiful but demanding: their queens are **TEMPORARY SOCIAL PARASITES** that must be introduced to *Lasius niger* host workers to found a colony. Fascinating, but not a first project — start with *niger* or *flavus*.

October

MID AUTUMN
the season closes

The last flights of the year. On the final warm afternoons the parasitic *Lasius* and stray red ants finish up, and then Britain's flight season shuts down until next May.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Parasitic Yellow Ants <i>Lasius umbratus & mixtus</i>	ACTIVE	Into early Oct	Last warm, still afternoons	★★★
Red Ants <i>Myrmica spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Last stragglers	Mild, humid afternoons	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE Don't write the year off at the first chilly night — a warm October spell can pull one last flight out of the autumn species. But once the cold sets in for good, hang up the tubes: nothing else will fly until spring.

November & December

WINTER
the off-season

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

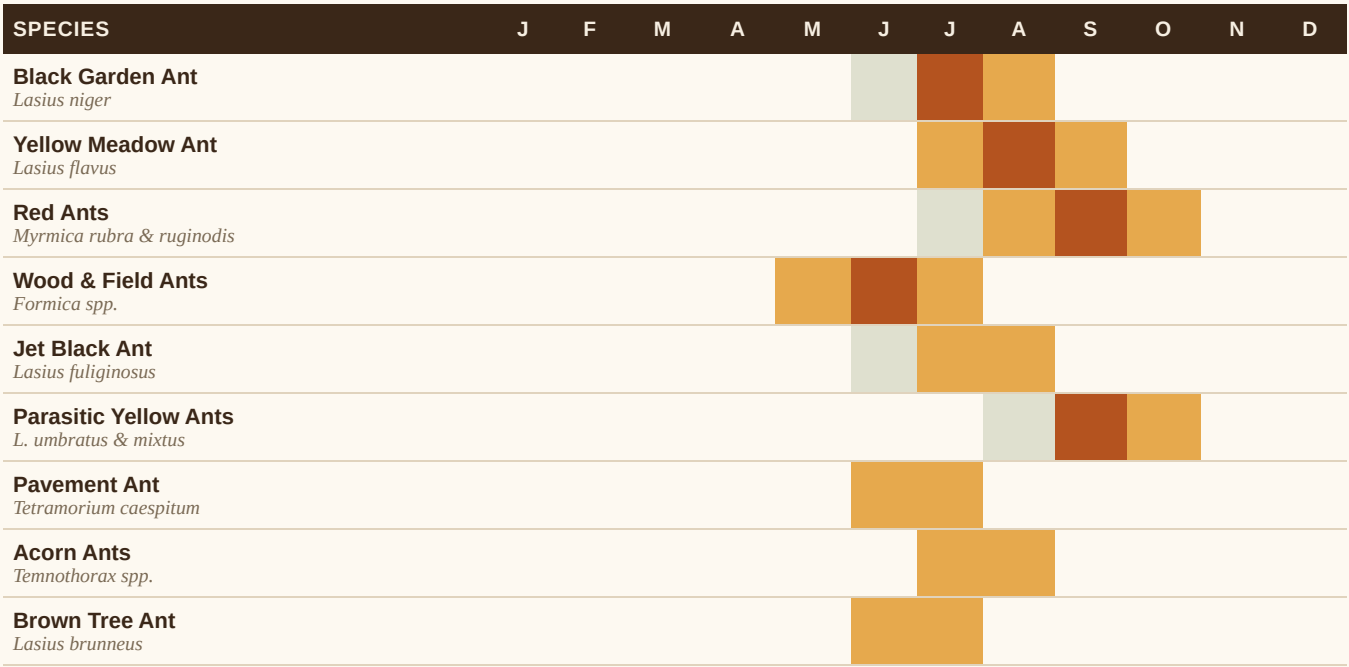
WHAT'S HAPPENING	STATUS	WINDOW	NOTES	CATCH
No nuptial flights <i>Colonies entering hibernation</i>	CLOSED	Nov – Dec	Far too cold; overwinter your colonies	—

KEEPER'S NOTE This is **HIBERNATION SEASON**. British species (Lasius, Myrmica, Formica) need a genuine winter rest: move colonies to a cool **5–12 °C** spot — a garage, shed or fridge box — for around 2–4 months. It is not optional; skipping it harms their health and long-term growth. Then watch for the wood ants next May and begin again.

PULL-OUT REFERENCE

The British Year at a Glance

Every major UK keeper species and its flight window on one page. **Dark = peak**, gold = active, pale = early/tail. The south flies earliest; the north and Scotland run later.



 Peak flight  Active  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 pot or tube — never squeeze. On Flying Ant Day you can gather dozens of *Lasius niger* queens off pavements and walls in minutes.

3

Prepare a test-tube setup

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

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

Lasius niger and *flavus* are fully claustral — they raise the first workers on their own reserves, so **don't feed them**. *Myrmica* red ants are semi-claustral and need small amounts of food. Wood-ant and parasitic *Lasius* queens need a host colony (advanced).

6

Wait for nanitics

Over a few weeks she'll raise her first tiny workers ("nanitics"). Queens caught late in the season may overwinter before producing workers. Once workers arrive, begin offering sugar water and small insects.

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.

NEVER MISS FLYING ANT DAY

Know the moment the ants take flight.

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

- Flying Ant Day & flight alerts for your UK region
- Log your queens and track founding progress
- Care sheets for niger, flavus, Myrmica & more
- Free keeper playbooks & guides from AntAddict

Start free at colonycue.app →