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UNITED STATES FIELD GUIDE

The Ant Nuptial Flight Calendar



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

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 single day a colony sends its winged queens and males into the air to mate. Miss the weather window and you miss the season. These six rules decide whether you come home with a queen.

1 Watch the heat

Most U.S. species fly when afternoon highs hit **70–90 °F**. Warm, still air lets queens rise and drift. A cold snap shuts it down.

2 Chase the rain

The golden trigger: a soaking rain followed by a warm, humid day. Softened soil lets new queens dig. **Hunt the 24–48 hours after a summer storm.**

3 Mind the calm

Low wind and high humidity are ideal. Blustery days ground most flights. Evenings that stay warm and sticky are prime for carpenter and pavement ants.

4 Know the clock

Timing is species-specific: harvester & fire ants fly in the **afternoon**; many *Camponotus* and *Lasius* fly at **dusk**; some at first light. Each month's table tells you.

5 Hunt the lights

Queens are drawn to light. Check under streetlamps, gas-station canopies, white walls and windowsills the morning after a flight for walking, de-winged queens.

6 Go south early

Everything in this book shifts **earlier in the South and later up North**. A May flight in Texas may be a July flight in Minnesota. Use your local weather as 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's the one you want.

January & February

DEEP WINTER
the quiet season

Across most of the country the ground is closed for business — but the South and the earliest riser of them all are already stirring.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Winter Ant <i>Prenolepis imparis</i>	EARLY	Warm spells, Feb →	Sunny 50–65 °F days after a thaw	★★
Fire Ants (Deep South) <i>Solenopsis invicta</i>	EARLY	Warm FL/TX days	Afternoons >75 °F after rain	★
Pyramid / Cone Ants <i>Dorymyrmex</i> spp.	EARLY	Warm southern days	Sunny, mild afternoons	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE *Prenolepis imparis*, the "winter ant," is famous for flying on freakishly warm late-winter afternoons when nothing else is out — often the very first queen of the year. Watch the forecast for the season's first 60 °F day.

March

EARLY SPRING
the season opens

The soil warms and the first big wave begins. Winter ants peak while spring genera start testing the air across the southern half of the country.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Winter Ant <i>Prenolepis imparis</i>	ACTIVE	Mar–Apr	Warm 55–68 °F afternoons	★★
Carpenter Ants (South) <i>Camponotus spp.</i>	EARLY	Opens now, peaks May	Warm humid evenings after rain	★
Big-headed Ants <i>Pheidole spp.</i>	EARLY	Mar–Jul	Warm days after rain	★★
Little Black Ant <i>Monomorium minimum</i>	EARLY	Mar–Aug	Warm, humid afternoons	★★
Crazy Ants <i>Nylanderia spp.</i>	EARLY	Peaks May	Warm humid spells	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE March is a "watch and prep" month up North — clean your test tubes and outworlds now. In the Gulf states, carpenter ant season is already cracking open on the first muggy evenings.

April

MID SPRING
carpenter ant ramp-up

Spring is in full swing. Carpenter ants build toward their peak and a broad mix of spring genera joins the air on warm, damp afternoons.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Carpenter Ants <i>Camponotus spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Apr–Jul, peak May–Jun	Warm humid evenings after rain	★
Odorous House Ant <i>Tapinoma sessile</i>	ACTIVE	Apr–Jul	Warm, humid afternoons	★★
Field / Wood Ants <i>Formica spp.</i>	EARLY	Apr–Oct, peak Jul	Warm sunny afternoons	★★
Acorn Ants <i>Temnothorax spp.</i>	EARLY	Apr–Aug	Warm afternoons	★★★
Fire Ants <i>Solenopsis invicta</i>	ACTIVE	Spring–fall (South)	Afternoon >75 °F, ~1 day after rain	★

KEEPER'S NOTE Warm rains + a still evening = prime *Camponotus* weather. Check white walls, porch lights and sidewalks at dusk and again at first light for large de-winged queens (often 15 mm+).

May

LATE SPRING

peak carpenter season

One of the biggest months of the year. Carpenter ants hit their peak, harvester ants open in the South and West, and pavement ants begin their famous sidewalk swarms.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Carpenter Ants <i>Camponotus spp.</i>	PEAK	Peak May–Jun	Warm humid evenings after rain	★
Pavement Ant <i>Tetramorium immigrans</i>	ACTIVE	May–Jul, peak Jun	Warm evenings; synchronized swarms	★
Harvester Ants <i>Pogonomyrmex spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Late May–Aug	Afternoon after a thunderstorm	★★
Crazy Ants <i>Nylanderia spp.</i>	PEAK	Peak May	Warm humid days	★★
Big-headed Ants <i>Pheidole spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Peak May–Jul	Warm days after rain	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE If you catch one species this year, make it a May *Camponotus* queen — big, hardy, beginner-friendly and fully claustral (she needs no food to raise her first workers). Store her somewhere dark and undisturbed.

June

EARLY SUMMER
pavement & harvester peak

The pavement-ant sidewalk swarms crest, fire ants run hot across the South, and harvester ants dominate the arid West after the first big storms.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Pavement Ant <i>Tetramorium immigrans</i>	PEAK	Peak June	Warm evenings; huge synchronized flights	★
Fire Ants <i>Solenopsis invicta</i>	PEAK	Peak Jun (South)	Afternoon >75 °F, ~24h after rain	★
Harvester Ants <i>Pogonomyrmex spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Late May–Aug	Afternoon after thunderstorms	★★
Carpenter Ants <i>Camponotus spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Tail of peak	Warm humid evenings	★
Fungus-growing Ant <i>Trachymyrmex septentrionalis</i>	ACTIVE	May–Aug	Warm humid afternoons	★★★

KEEPER'S NOTE Pavement ants stage some of the easiest catches of the year — thousands of queens swarming over sidewalks and driveways on warm June evenings. Bring several tubes; you'll have your pick.

July

MIDSUMMER
the monsoon month

Peak *Formica* season, and in the desert Southwest the summer monsoon unleashes the year's most spectacular flights — including honeypot ants.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Field / Wood Ants <i>Formica</i> spp.	PEAK	Peak July	Warm sunny afternoons	★★
Honeypot Ants <i>Myrmecocystus</i> spp.	ACTIVE	SW monsoon, Jul–Aug	Night after heavy monsoon rain	★★
Harvester Ants <i>Pogonomyrmex</i> spp.	PEAK	Peaks with monsoon	Afternoon after desert storms	★★
Acrobat Ants <i>Crematogaster</i> spp.	EARLY	Building to Aug peak	Warm humid days after rain	★★
Fire Ants <i>Solenopsis invicta</i>	ACTIVE	Spring–fall	Afternoon >75 °F after rain	★

KEEPER'S NOTE Southwestern keepers live for the July monsoon. The first heavy storm after a dry spell can trigger *Myrmecocystus*, *Pogonomyrmex* and *Veromessor* the same night — head out with a headlamp once the rain stops.

August

LATE SUMMER
the acrobat & harvester peak

A huge, diverse month. Acrobat ants, big-headed ants and Aphaenogaster peak, monsoon flights continue in the West, and the first Lasius swarms hint at fall.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Acrobat Ants <i>Crematogaster</i> spp.	PEAK	Peak August	Warm humid days after rain	★★
Funnel Ants <i>Aphaenogaster</i> spp.	PEAK	May–Oct, peak Aug	Warm humid afternoons after rain	★★
Harvester Ants <i>Pogonomyrmex</i> spp.	ACTIVE	Through Aug	Afternoon after storms	★★
Honeypot Ants <i>Myrmecocystus</i> spp.	ACTIVE	SW monsoon	Night after heavy rain	★★
Cornfield Ant <i>Lasius neoniger</i> & allies	EARLY	Building to Sep peak	Humid afternoons after rain	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE Late August is the front edge of the year's grand finale. Keep your eyes on humidity: a muggy, still afternoon following rain is the classic setup for the enormous *Lasius* flights of early September.

September

EARLY FALL
the *Lasius* grand finale

The single biggest flight event of the year for much of the country: the massive, synchronized *Lasius* swarms — including the parasitic queens prized by advanced keepers.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Cornfield Ant <i>Lasius neoniger</i> & allies	PEAK	Peak late Aug–early Sep	Warm, humid, still afternoon after rain	★★
Parasitic <i>Lasius</i> <i>L. claviger</i> , <i>L. latipes</i> , <i>L. interjectus</i>	PEAK	Sep–Oct	Warm afternoons; often with <i>neoniger</i>	★★★
Myrmica Ants <i>Myrmica</i> spp.	PEAK	Apr–Oct, peak Sep	Warm humid afternoons	★★
Acrobat Ants <i>Crematogaster</i> spp.	ACTIVE	Through Sep	Warm humid days after rain	★★
Winter Ant (fall brood) <i>Prenolepis imparis</i>	EARLY	Occasional fall flights	Mild days	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE Circle the first warm, humid afternoon after early-September rain — often around Labor Day. *Lasius neoniger* queens rain down by the thousands. Advanced keepers use this window to find parasitic *Lasius* queens for social-parasite colonies.

October

MID FALL
the season winds down

The flights taper north to south. Late *Lasius* and *Myrmica* stragglers fly on the last warm days, while the Deep South keeps fire ants going.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Parasitic <i>Lasius</i> <i>L. claviger</i> & allies	ACTIVE	Into early Oct	Last warm afternoons	★★★
Myrmica Ants <i>Myrmica</i> spp.	ACTIVE	Tail of season	Warm humid afternoons	★★
Field / Wood Ants <i>Formica</i> spp.	ACTIVE	Last stragglers	Warm sunny afternoons	★★
Fire Ants (Deep South) <i>Solenopsis invicta</i>	ACTIVE	Warm southern days	Afternoon >75 °F after rain	★

KEEPER'S NOTE Don't pack it in on the first cold night — a warm October rebound can pull one last flight out of *Lasius* and *Myrmica*. In the Gulf states, catching is still very much open.

November & December

WINTER
the off-season

The hunting year closes across nearly all of the country. Use these months to settle colonies for hibernation — and to plan next season with this calendar.

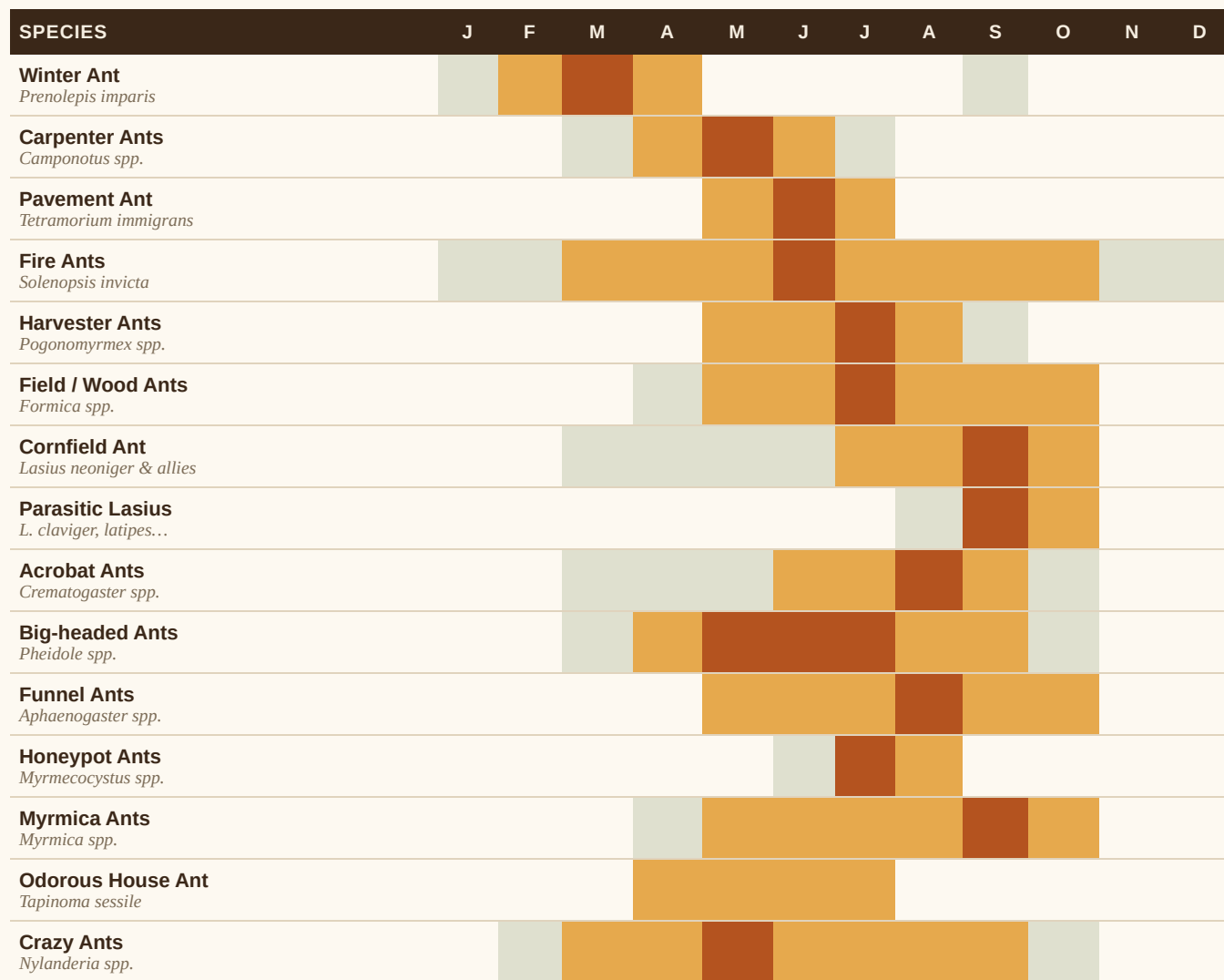
SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Fire Ants (Deep South only) <i>Solenopsis invicta</i>	RARE	Warm FL/TX spells	Unseasonably warm afternoons after rain	★
Pyramid Ants (South) <i>Dorymyrmex spp.</i>	RARE	Warm southern days	Mild, sunny afternoons	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE For most keepers this is **DIAPAUSE SEASON**: move temperate colonies (Camponotus, Lasius, Formica, Myrmica) to a cool 50–60 °F spot for 2–4 months of rest. It dramatically boosts next-year growth. Then watch for the first warm February day and *Prenolepis* — the cycle begins again.

PULL-OUT REFERENCE

The Year at a Glance

Every major U.S. keeper species and its flight window on one page. **Dark = peak**, gold = active, pale = early/tail. Shift earlier in the South, later in the North.



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

THE PAYOFF

You Found a Queen — Now What?

A de-winged queen 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 large 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. Keep several on hand during a big flight.

3

Prepare a test-tube setup

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

4

Dark, warm, undisturbed

Put the tube in a drawer at room temperature (~75 °F). **Do not check her constantly** — stress is the #1 killer of founding queens. Peek once a week at most.

5

Know if she needs feeding

Fully claustral queens (*Camponotus*, *Lasius*, *Solenopsis*) raise the first workers on their own body reserves — **don't feed her**. Semi-claustral queens (*Pogonomyrmex*, *Myrmica*) need small food; know your species.

6

Wait for nanitics

In 3–8 weeks she'll raise her first tiny workers ("nanitics"). Once you have workers, begin offering sugar water and small insects, and plan the move to a formicarium.

One queen, one rule: patience. The keepers who lose queens are almost always the ones who open the tube too often. Log your catch date and species — then leave her alone 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* — and helps you raise every queen you catch.

- Local flight alerts tuned to your region & weather
- Log your queens and track founding progress
- Species care sheets, feeding schedules & reminders
- Free keeper playbooks & guides from AntAddict

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