

It's Really Going Places.

Best Management Practices

Ghost Ants

Introduction: The ghost ant, *Tapinoma melanocephalum*, probably originated from Asia or Africa. The common name refers to the fact that this tiny ant is very hard to see due to its pale color and minute size. It is a common pest inside homes in tropical areas as well as in central and south Florida and Hawaii. Further north it survives the winter only in heated structures.



Description and Life History: Ghost ant workers are monomorphic, or all one size, ranging between 1.3 and 1.9 mm in length. The head and thorax are dark, while the remainder of the body is very pale in color. The pedicel is one-segmented, and is concealed by the base of the gaster. On casual inspection, the tiny ants may not look ant-like, and their movements are quick and erratic when disturbed. Ghost ants do not have a sting, but will emit a rotten odor when crushed.

Ghost ant colony size is highly variable, and may contain one hundred to several thousand workers. These ants are highly adaptable in their nesting habits, and may be found in flowerpots; at the base of palm fronds; or under loose bark, stones, logs, firewood and debris. Indoor nests occur in cracks, wall voids, behind baseboards, and in other cavities. Colony members may be spread throughout several nests that are close to one another, with more than one functional queen per colony. Establishment of new colonies may occur by budding, where some reproductive females, workers, and possibly some brood migrate to a new nesting site.

Workers will tend honeydew-secreting insects such as aphids and mealybugs to satisfy their fondness for sweet foods, but they will also feed on dead insects. They readily trail into structures via tree or shrub branches that contact the structure or from nests along the foundation. In kitchens and bathrooms they are often found on sinks, counters, tubs and floors as their high water requirement leads them to trail to water sources. Ghost ants forage for sweets and protein inside homes.

Management: Nest locations should be determined by inspecting both the inside and outside of the structure and grounds. Eliminating harborage sites such as debris, etc. near the foundation is an important step, together with pruning of tree and shrub branches that touch the structure. Be sure to check along the foundation wall, patio, and sidewalks, pulling back mulch to look for nests. Follow trailing ants back to their nest to identify treatment sites. Carpet edges and moldings are important indoor sites to examine, along with electrical outlets, telephone jacks, windowsills and frames and areas near water sources.

Treatment: *TalstarOne™ multi-insecticide:* Treat ghost ant nests using a 0.02% to 0.06% suspension - 0.33 to 1 fluid oz of TalstarOne™ per gallon of water. The higher rate is used for heavy infestations, quicker knockdown, or longer residual control. Indoors TalstarOne™ may be used as a low-pressure crack and crevice, pinstream or spot spray at the above concentrations. The application may also be made with a paintbrush.

If there is continual ghost ant invasion from outside, a perimeter treatment should be made to a 6-10 foot band of soil and vegetation around and adjacent to the structure. The foundation should also be treated to a height of 2 to 3 feet.

Talstar® PL granular insecticide or Talstar® EZ granular insecticide: These may be applied as a perimeter treatment at the rate of 2.3 to 4.6 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Apply to a 5-10 foot band of ground around and adjacent to the foundation. Application may also be made to boundary areas including located nests in soil, gardens, pavement crevices, planters, and mulched areas.

Always read and follow label directions.

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