

## LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT PEST OF THE MONTH PROGRAM NO. 5



### ARGENTINE ANTS

#### INTRODUCTION

- The Argentine ant is the most common pest ant which invades buildings in California.
- They are small dark brown ants which travel in trails (in files or in lines).
- Their most favorite food is honeydew, a sweet substance excreted by plant sucking insects such as aphids, soft scales, mealybugs, whiteflies, and psyllids.
- These ants are commonly found in trees and shrubs which are infested with honeydew-producing insects.
- They often come indoors during summer and fall when honeydew production declines.
- Low and high temperatures, excessive moisture (from heavy irrigation and rainfall), and drought conditions, are factors which often cause Argentine ants to come indoors.
- Human foods, particularly sweet foods, moisture, and nesting sites (cracks in concrete) are things which encourage Argentine ants to come indoors.

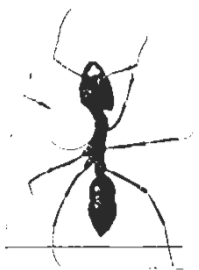


#### ANT MANAGEMENT FOR TEACHERS

- Keep classrooms clean and unattractive to ants by not allowing food and beverage consumption in them.
- Ask students to remove food and food wrappers from lockers, cubbies, and desks daily.
- Keep any food, including pet food, stored in sealed containers.
- Clean up teacher's lounge at the end on each day.
- Clean and dry sinks at the end of every day so as to deny ants a source of food and water overnight.
- Communicate with the plant manager regarding special needs or ant sightings.

#### ANT MANAGEMENT FOR FOOD SERVICE STAFF

- Store food in plastic, glass, or metal containers which have tight-fitting lids.
- Keep indoor trash in lined, covered containers and **empty them daily**.
- Clean up food spills promptly.
- Clean food-soiled dishes, utensils, and surfaces at the end of each day.
- Maintain clean shelves in storage areas.
- Communicate with the plant manager about repairing leaks, emptying trash receptacles daily, and vacuuming up ant trails as necessary.





## ANT MANAGEMENT FOR CUSTODIAL STAFF

- Vacuum up ant trails using a vacuum or wipe up ants with soapy water (1 tablespoon of dish soap in 1 quart of water).
- Empty trash **DAILY** from classrooms and food service areas.
- Place outdoor trash receptacles on hard, cleanable surfaces and at least 50 feet away from building entrances.
- Wash **ALL** trash containers **REGULARLY** – wash those outdoors at least monthly and keep area around them clean.
- Collect litter from school grounds at **LEAST** once a week.
- **DO NOT** allow storage of recyclable soda cans indoors particularly in food areas and in classrooms.
- Have recyclables removed from the premises at **LEAST** once a week.
- Communicate pest management roles to staff and students, including not storing or consuming food in classrooms, removing food or food wrappers from lockers, cubbies, and desks on a daily basis.
- Clean floors and vacuum carpets daily in areas where food is prepared, dispensed, served, consumed, displayed for sale, and at least weekly in other areas.
- Eliminate spills in storage and receiving areas and keep shelves clean.

## ANT MANAGEMENT FOR MAINTENANCE STAFF

- Caulk cracks and crevices and other points of entry for ants into buildings.
- Weather strip doors and windows.
- Fix leaky pipes promptly, especially those under sinks.
- Trim trees and shrubs so as to ensure that branches do not touch the buildings.

## TWO SIMPLE ANT CONTROL STRATEGIES INDOORS

- Have custodial staff vacuum up ants and ant trails promptly even if you are only seeing a few ants. This will prevent them from recruiting other foragers to a food source.
- Use soapy water to promptly clean up ant trails. Mix one tablespoon of dish soap in one quart of water in a spray bottle. Always shake the bottle before using it. Make sure you label the spray bottle clearly so that others would know what's in it. Soapy water clogs up the ants breathing orifices (spiracles) and suffocates them. Most importantly, it removes the pheromone trail which leads the ants to a food source and this will disorient other worker ants.

Prepared by Dr. Hanif Gulmahamad, LAUSD IPM Coordinator

Date: 11 June, 2003

Issue: 05 - 6

**ANTS PARTYING AT THE DINING  
TABLE. DON'T PUT THE WELCOME  
MAT OUT FOR THEM.**

