



A MESSAGE FROM SANTA CLARA COUNTY IPM PROGRAM

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO RESOLVE CHRONIC ANT PROBLEMS: It's happened to all of us. You stroll into the break room, kitchenette, meeting room or office corridor where you have just celebrated a retirement or birthday for your fellow employee, left some goodies behind and next day you find ants marching all over counters. It seems they're taking over the whole office. In some other cases we have seen that ants are marching along in clinic laboratories, surgery rooms as if they are planning to assist us resolve our ailments. Despite the beneficial role ants play outdoors, ants become pests when they enter offices in search of food, water, and shelter. If ants do invade your buildings, don't panic. A management plan based on sanitation and physical controls can effectively reduce ant populations while still allowing ants to play their part in the environment.



We need you to help your friendly pest management professional to provide all of us a healthy pest and pesticide free environment, where we all can work & enjoy. Here are some of the ways you can help us in this regard:

Building Tenants (Employees):

- If you encounter ant trails, sponge invaders ants with soapy water as soon as you see them.
- Remove possible sources of excess moisture. Some time ants set up a colony inside an indoor potted plant. Remove infested potted plants.
- Report any kind of water leaks in and around your offices for prompt repairs. Example of water leaks are condensate build up in the windows, condensate build up under air conditioning ducts, plumbing leaks, clogged gutters, broken or misarranged sprinkler, excess irrigation on lawns and landscape etc.
- Sanitation eliminates food for ants.
- Eat at designated break/lunch rooms. Avoid snacking in the offices. If you do, vacuum carpet and swipe clean desk counters to remove any food residue.
- Throw/Discard all food waste (such as banana peels, candy wrappers, leftover food etc.) in designated trash bin. Avoid using office trash bins to throw food waste. It is possible that it may not be cleaned on daily basis.
- Use soapy water to wash any bottles, cans, wrappings, and other items that have food residues before storing them for recycling.
- In the kitchenette, drain all sinks; remove all food debris, clean up food sources such as sugar spills. Periodically give all food storage, and prep areas a complete cleaning, focusing on areas where grease & food debris accumulate. For example: Coffee Brewers, Toasters, Microwave ovens, and Refrigerators, garbage bins etc.
- Food not kept in the refrigerator should be kept in containers that close tightly. Cardboard boxes are not ant or roach proof. Screw-top jars are ant-proof only in the lid has a rubber seal, because some ants can follow the spiral ridges to get into the jar. Glass containers with rubber gaskets or plastic containers with tight-fitting, snap-top lids are also ant-proof.
- Keep particularly attractive substances, like sugar and honey, in a refrigerator.
- Any food kept in office should be stored in ant-proof containers.



- In Clinic labs or similar environment, where cultures are used, please ensure that these Petri dishes are placed on ant proof platforms. A petroleum jelly barrier around the Petri dishes may allow preventing ants invading the same. Caulking and sealing all possible cracks & crevices may be required preventing ants entering such facilities.

Building Indoor & Outdoor Custodial Maintenance Staff & Facility Managers:

- Remove possible sources of excess moisture. Some time ants set up a colony inside an indoor potted plant. Remove infested potted plants.
- Promptly repair any kind of water leaks in and around offices. Example of water leaks are condensate build up in the windows, condensate build up under air conditioning ducts, plumbing leaks, clogged gutters, broken or misarranged sprinkler, excess irrigation on lawns and landscape etc. Make sure that the foundation perimeter is kept dry. Replace moist or rotting wood as needed.
- Plants and trees in contact with the structure and overhanging limbs that provide ants access to the structure and the roof line provide access to the structure for foraging ants and will hold moisture against the structure producing conditions conducive to ants. Plan to remove such conducive conditions. Remove vegetation and make a dry vegetation free zone, such as gravel or stones against the perimeter of foundation. It will discourage nest building; Please note that wood chip mulches and landscape plants that are in touch with building foundation or wall provide a good nesting environment.
- Manage honeydew-producing insects such as aphids, whiteflies, psyllids, and soft scales on plants near the building. These honeydew producers often support large colonies of ants that subsequently invade buildings.
- Remove trees that consistently host ants and are adjacent to buildings.
- Caulk cracks and crevices around foundations that provide entry from outside. Caulk all potential entryways with silicone caulking compound. Use mildew-resistant caulk in moist areas. It is not necessary or practical to seal all cracks, but begin with the access point that the current trail of ants is using. Seal as many cracks as time allows, especially those around baseboards, cupboards, pipes, sinks, toilets, and electrical outlets. Use weather strips around doors and windows where ants may enter.
- Remove food waste garbage daily. Thoroughly clean or wash the waste bin with sanitizer, remove all possible food residue and then replace the plastic liner. Similarly wash and sanitize recyclable containers, and promptly empty such containers if pests become an issue or at least once per week.
- Clean floors and vacuum carpets daily in areas where food is served. Eliminate spills promptly.
- Place outdoor garbage containers at least 50 feet away from building entrances.
- If responsible, vacuum ant trails using strong vacuum or wipe up with soapy water as explained above.
- Communicate food storage issues with individual office occupant or take necessary help from facility managers to address the same. Ask office occupants to help you in keeping their office/cubbies clean. Remind them to remove food or food wrappers from their cupboards, desk counters etc.



Illustration adopted from TIC IPM Online

Need more info? The Santa Clara County IPM website provides comprehensive information for homeowners and structural pest control professionals who wish to practice non-chemical alternatives with your help, while minimizing reliance on pesticides. For more information on IPM contact the Santa Clara County's IPM Manager at 408-299-5105 or E Mail: Naresh.Duggal@ceo.sccgov.org.