

# Paekākāriki Argentine Ant Response

September 2025

**These ants are a major pest, a threat to our outdoor lifestyle and the biodiversity we value.**

They are almost impossible to eradicate but **control is possible.**

## Why they are a problem

- If left unchecked, they could form a super colony across Paekākāriki.
- These ants multiply very quickly.
- They have a huge appetite and utilise any food source they can find.
- They can quickly over-run your property and make it almost impossible to enjoy your outdoor areas.
- They are also a serious indoor pest. They can get into your food sources, including screw-top jars, microwaves and fridges.
- Argentine ants can bite but they are not poisonous.
- They can eliminate other types of ants and destroy beneficial insects and earthworms.
- They can kill baby birds in nests.
- These ants will farm aphids and scale insects, increasing their numbers on your plants.
- They are a particular threat to organic growers and gardeners.
- You can treat infestations yourself or there are professional ant control companies you can use.

## How to recognise the ants

**Colour** Light to dark-honey brown (most common household ants are black).

**Size** 2.5 – 3mm long.

**Movements** Travel in multiple lines along the edge of paths and driveways, and up walls and trees.

## Where you're likely to find them

### Outside:

- Under or in pot plants.
- Rockeries, paving and path edges.
- Compost and under bark.
- In bodywork of caravans or campervans.
- Under debris like bricks, stones or boards - anything that may offer them protection and shelter.

### Inside:

- If these ants have moved inside your house they will be very obvious from their trails.
- They usually nest outside and only travel inside to forage.



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## What you should do

### Identification

Argentine ants move in distinctive trails; they move quite quickly and are aggressive.

### Containment

Ants can spread quickly if aided by humans. Basic biosecurity measures are essential to make sure you don't help them spread:

- Before accepting plants or material like compost or mulch check that they are clear from ants.
- Avoid moving pot plants, compost, mulch, old stacked timber, used retaining wall material or other garden matter from your garden if you know or suspect you have Argentine ants.
- Do not drop of pots for recycling or plants you have grown at home to Potty Potters. Contact them first.
- Inspect outdoor equipment and tools and check underneath caravans, campervans etc (particularly if they have been parked up for a while) before taking them off your property.

### Treatment

- The current recommendation is to carry out ant control twice per year. Spring (late October to early December) and Autumn.
- For best results, bait your whole property with Xtinguish/Vanquish. Active ingredient Fipronil the same active ingredient found in Frontline flea control for cats and dogs. Only available online: [www.flybusters.co.nz](http://www.flybusters.co.nz)
- Control should involve putting bait at intervals of 1 – 2m everywhere that ant trails are found.
- Effective control is dependent on ants taking the bait back to the nest to the queens, workers, pupae and the larvae.
- Order bait in advance and co-ordinate with neighbours ahead of a three-day fine spell.
- Spraying foraging ants with fly spray or tipping boiling water or petrol on them will have little effect and is discouraged.

### Precautions to take before the baiting season

- Securely store food that is favoured by the ants.
- Put pet food bowls in a tray of water to prevent access by the ants.
- Clean kitchen benches and other surfaces by wiping with lemon juice, soapy water or diluted eucalyptus or tea tree oil to discourage ants.
- Trim trees and plants near your house to reduce ant access and block any obvious entry points.

#### To do:

- Talk to your neighbours.
- Search for ant activity.
- Identify your ant.
- Order baits.
- Prevent all vegetation from touching walls.
- Co-ordinate with neighbours.
- Bait ahead of a three-day fine spell.
- Monitor results.

## Biosecurity is now essential in Paekākāriki

We encourage villagers to talk to their neighbours and take a community minded approach to this pest.

For authoritative information on Argentine ants in New Zealand, please investigate the Landcare Research website:

<https://argentineants.landcareresearch.co.nz/>