

# Houston, We Have a Problem

It may sound like science fiction, but it's true. A new exotic insect species, the Raspberry crazy ant, has invaded 11 counties in the Houston area since pest control operator Tom Rasberry discovered the ants in Pasadena in 2002. By 2008 they had spread to Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston, Hardin, Harris, Jefferson, Liberty, Montgomery, Orange, Walker, and Wharton counties, and they're being found in an ever-widening area.

- At this time, the only way to control these ants is through professional pest control. Fire ant baits and other home pesticides are generally ineffective.
- As they continue to invade, Raspberry crazy ants decrease home and property values and could impact agriculture — both livestock and crops. Their activity has damaged electrical equipment and could affect computer systems, traffic signals, businesses, schools, airports, and hospitals.
- Until better control methods are developed, you can help by identifying crazy ant colonies and discouraging these ants from nesting in the landscape.



## Here's What You Can Do

- Report suspicious ant problems in your landscape, and have ants identified by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service.
- Do not move infested articles — such as containerized landscape plants, lumber, and yard waste — to uninfested areas.
- If your property is infested, remove all nonessential objects from the ground to discourage nesting.
- Avoid feeding the ants by eliminating food sources, which can include honeydew-producing landscape pests such as aphids, scales, and mealybugs.

## About Raspberry Crazy Ants

- They are similar to the Caribbean crazy ant, a serious pest in parts of Florida, but differ in their size and colony behavior.
- About 1/8 inch long, reddish brown, and nest throughout the landscape. Queens, eggs, larvae, and pupae can be found under, or in, almost any object. Entire colony will move to a new site when disturbed. Multiple queens lay hundreds of eggs, so colonies often contain millions of ants.
- Spread mainly by ground migration, not by mating flights. Can be spread by almost any ant-infested container or vehicle.
- May bite, but don't produce a painful sting. Displace other ant species and could affect wildlife such as honeybees and songbirds.

For more information, visit: <http://UrbanEntomology.tamu.edu>



## Partners in Prevention

This information was developed on behalf of the Crazy Ant Task Force members from the following agencies and organizations:

- Texas A&M University Department of Entomology, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, and Texas AgriLife Research
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
  - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine
  - Agricultural Research Service
- Texas Department of Agriculture
- Texas Department of Transportation
- Texas Parks and Wildlife
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife
- Texas Nursery and Landscape Association
- Budget Pest Control



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