

Ant Problems? Try a Baiting Approach

If you had ants infesting the kitchen last year, you were not alone. Last summer, we had hundreds of people calling the extension office for advice. To get ahead of the calls, a timely article on ant control might be in order.

When faced with ants, too often folks reach for the ant & roach spray. Unfortunately, sprays are not very useful because they do not affect the ant colony...only the offending workers. For every worker you see, there are hundreds more foraging in other areas and inside the colony.

Our recommendation for sweet-loving ants — the ones usually found in your kitchen, is to use a bait specially formulated to attract sugar ants. It takes some patience, but it is a better ant control approach because it has low risk and is more permanent.

The trick to using baits is to make sure that the offending ants find the bait, eat it voraciously and take it back to the

colony. The baits that come in the little cans don't seem to work. Most folks say that ants don't seem to be interested in going in them. It is important not to use sprays if you are going to use baits. Sprays may kill ants before they get back to the colony.

Not all ant species can be controlled by baits and some baits work better than others. In general, ants that eat a wide variety of foods will be less affected by baits because the bait will comprise a smaller proportion of their food. Sugar-loving ants are the easiest to control.

There are a couple inexpensive commercially-available baits for sweet-loving ants. The most effective use is a slow-acting poison. Two readily available over-the-counter baits are Terro® and Pic® liquid—both use boric acid as their active ingredient. Use the liquid bait as directed on the label. Sweet-loving ants should begin feeding on the bait within a couple hours. If they

don't feed on the bait, the bait won't work.

Some ants prefer grease and protein and may respond to protein/grease baits. A bait recipe from Field Guide for the Management of Structure Infesting Ants is:

- 2 ounces (4 tablespoons) peanut butter
- 3 ounces (6 tablespoons) honey

3/4 teaspoon boric acid
Some ants, like carpenter ants, feed on live insects and don't seem to like baits consistently enough to get good control. But, if they seem to be feeding on sweets in the kitchen, a boric ant bait just might work and would be worth a try.

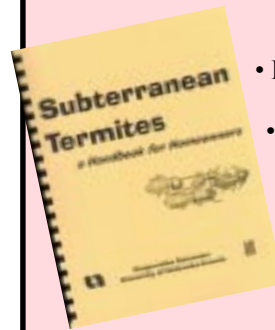
For more information about ant bait, check out educational resource "Ant Baits: A Least Toxic Control" (267-95). It is available through the Lancaster County Extension Office or the Web site at: <http://lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/pest/factsheets/267-95.htm> (BPO)

Environmental Focus



Workshop: Everything Homeowners Need to Know About Termite Control

Thursday, May 16, 6:30–9:30 p.m.
Lancaster Extension Education Center,
444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln



Attendees will:

- Learn unbiased information, based on research results
- Be better informed consumers and make better decisions
- Receive up-to-date reference materials

Cost: \$20

For more info call 441-7180.

Backyard Wildlife: To Feed a Hummingbird

Ruby-throated hummingbird spring migration is peaking now in eastern Nebraska. Typically, ruby-throat migration in Nebraska peaks about May 5–17 and September 2–18, but northward migration may occur from April to June and southward flights from August to early October.

The natural diet of hummers is flower nectar, tree sap, and small insects and spiders that are often captured in or near flowers. This natural diet can be supplemented by hummingbird feeders, which dispense a sugar water solution.

Commercial "nectar" solutions for hummingbirds can be purchased or easily made by mixing one part granulated white sugar (common table variety) with four parts water. For example, mix 1/4 cup sugar with one cup water. Boil the water, dissolve the sugar, then allow to cool before filling the feeder. Keep leftover portions refrigerated until needed. Change the mix every few days, more often in hot weather, and clean the feeder each time before refilling to prevent molds that can harm the birds.

Feeders can be cleaned by either rinsing with hot water, filling with vinegar and uncooked rice and shaking vigorously, or soaking the feeder in a solution of two ounces household bleach mixed with one gallon of water. A stiff bottle brush may help but avoid soaps because residues may interfere with the capillary action of the feeder.

When selecting a hummingbird feeder, look for one that's easy to fill and clean and without too many nooks and crannies. Some red on the feeder is desirable because it seems to attract hummingbirds, and bee



PHOTO/Russ Thompson

guards (grids or screens) over the feeding ports help discourage bees. Hang the feeder from a tree branch or on a deck or porch, preferably in partial shade, near flowers, and out of the wind. Consider using more than one feeder to prevent an aggressive male hummingbird from dominating and to add viewing opportunities. For example, place a feeder near your flowers and another closer to your home or viewing windows. Place feeders out in

time for expected arrivals and continue until hummingbirds migrate on.

For more information, including a list of flowers, shrubs and trees you can add to your landscape to help attract hummingbirds, be sure pick up the educational resource, "Backyard Wildlife: To Feed a Hummingbird" (G97-1331-A). This publication is available at the extension office and on the Web site at www.lancaster.unl.edu.

Hummingbird Feeder Tips

- Avoid honey mixtures for the nectar, this increases spoilage.
- Avoid red food coloring in your nectar mixture. If your feeder does not have a red tip on the feeding port, you can add a red plastic flower, red tape, red ribbon or even red fingernail polish on the surface of the feeding port.
- To prevent ants from coming to the feeder, keep the outside clean and, if needed, coat the feeder hanger or the spout with salad oil or petroleum jelly.
- To help attract small insects eaten by hummingbirds, hang an overripe banana peel or cantaloupe near the feeder; a mesh produce sack makes a convenient holder.
- Finally, to benefit hummingbirds, use all pesticides wisely and only when needed. And minimize insecticide use, especially around flowers, because hummingbirds depend on small insects as part of their diet.

2002 Household Hazardous Waste Collections

DATE & TIME	LOCATION
June 14 3–7 p.m.	Union College Parking Lot, North 52 and Cooper Street
June 15 9 a.m.–3 p.m.	Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department 3140 N Street
August 3 9 a.m.–3 p.m.	Nebraska Wesleyan University North 56 and Huntington Streets
September 21 9 a.m.–3 p.m.	Pfizer Inc. 601 W. Cornhusker Highway
October 19 9 a.m.–3 p.m.	Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department 3140 N Street
November 16 9 a.m.–3 p.m.	State Fair Park 4-H Youth Complex

ITEMS THAT YOU CAN BRING FOR DISPOSAL

- Heavy metals: items containing mercury such as thermometers and thermostats.
- Solvents: mineral spirits, turpentine, paint strippers and thinners, oil-based paints, varnishes, stains, polishes and waxes.
- Pesticides: weed killers, garden sprays, wood preservatives, roach powder, rat poisons. You may also bring EPA banned products, like DDT, chlordane, 2,4,5-T, pentachlorophenol, silvex, PCP and Dursban.
- PCB's: Ballasts from old fluorescent fixtures and capacitors from old appliances including radios, motors and televisions.

Leave products in their *original* container and keep the label intact. Open, leaking or rusted containers should be placed in a clear plastic bag during transport. Do not mix chemicals.

DO NOT BRING: latex paint, medicines, explosives or ammunition, fertilizers, used oil, general household trash, antifreeze or batteries.

These collections are for households only; not businesses. Only residents of Lincoln and Lancaster County can bring items to collections. For more specific information, call the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at 441-8040.