

AGES 6 AND UP

1450

Ant Farm[®]

Gel Colony[®]

live ant habitat

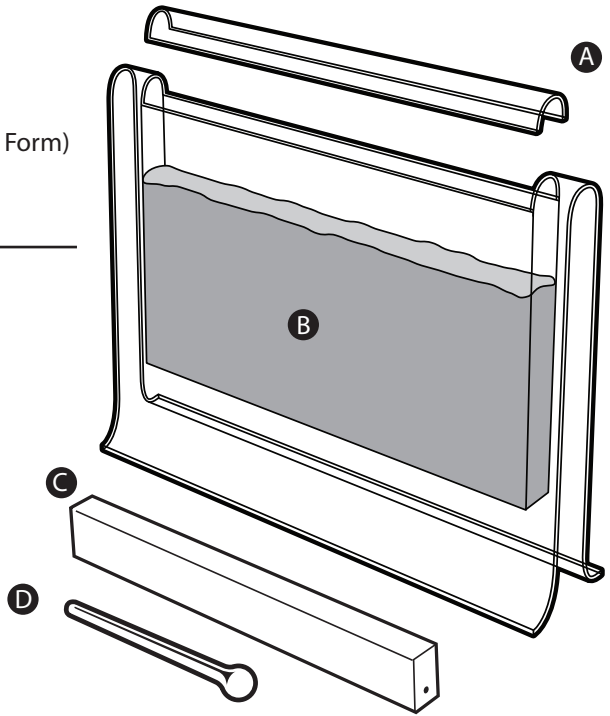


Ant Watcher's Manual

- A. Habitat lid**
 - B. Gel**
 - C. Optional light module**
(Not included - see Order Form)
 - D. Tunnel starter tool**
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Enjoy the View!

Ant Farm Gel Colony is a sleek habitat that provides an ultra-cool 3-D view of the ants' world. The translucent gel provides an excellent living environment for ants. Watch them build tunnels and passageways right before your eyes.



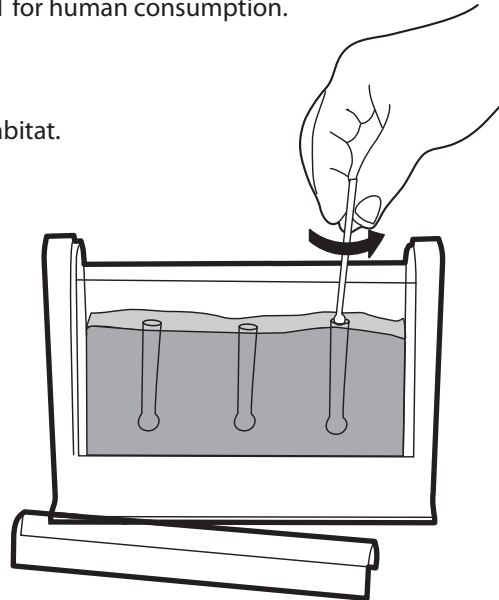
It's All in the Gel

The unique gel was originally developed by NASA for a space shuttle experiment to see how ants live and work in zero-gravity. It is specially formulated to provide all the necessary nutrients and moisture for your ants. There is no need to add water or food to the habitat.

Please note: The gel is non-toxic, but is NOT for human consumption.

Preparing the Habitat

1. Remove and discard plastic wrap from habitat.
2. Remove the habitat lid.
3. Remove and discard plastic liner and oxygen absorber packet from inside habitat.
4. With the tunnel starter tool, make three holes in the gel, each about two inches deep and spaced equally apart. Swirl the tool a bit to enlarge the holes.



Note: Never touch ants directly. They can bite or sting to defend themselves. If you are allergic to insect bites, you might have an allergic reaction that could require immediate medical attention.

Obtaining Your Ants

You can order ants by mail with the included ant coupon or you can stock your Gel Colony with ants from your own neighborhood.

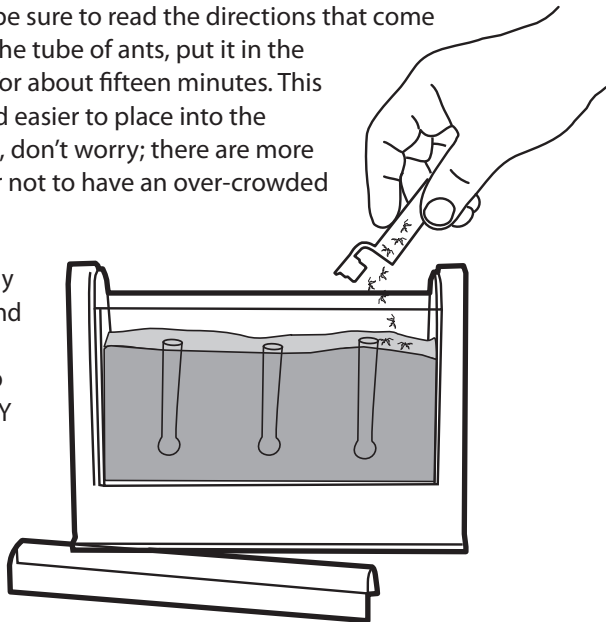
To order ants by mail, fill out the ant coupon and send it to us in the included envelope along with your payment. You will receive by mail a supply of harvester worker ants. (Note: We cannot supply queens or male ants.)

Normally you can expect to receive your ants in three to six weeks, but shipment may be postponed for a while if the weather is too hot or too cold for ants to safely make their long journey in the mail. Your ants will be sent when the temperature in your area is consistently within a safe range of 34° to 85°F (1° to 29°C). If you have an outdoor mailbox, watch for the mail and do not let the ants stay long in there. It may become too hot or too cold for them! Ask your mail carrier to watch for it and bring it to your front door if that is possible.

You can stock your habitat with ants from your neighborhood, instead of ordering ants. Look for large ants that cannot escape through the air holes. Try to find ants that are nesting in the ground – they will be more likely to dig tunnels than ants that live in trees or elsewhere. Let the ants crawl up onto a stick without touching them. Remove the habitat lid, carefully shake the ants in, and replace the lid.

Stocking Your Gel Colony

1. When you receive your ants, be sure to read the directions that come with them. Before you open the tube of ants, put it in the refrigerator (not the freezer) for about fifteen minutes. This makes the ants less active and easier to place into the habitat. If a few ants are dead, don't worry; there are more than enough ants. (It is better not to have an over-crowded habitat.)
2. Remove the habitat lid, carefully open the plastic tube of ants and gently shake or tap it to allow the live ants to fall in. Try not to let any dead ants fall in. **BE VERY CAREFUL NOT TO TOUCH THE ANTS!** Replace the lid tightly.



3. The ants may seem inactive for the first few hours. That is because they are not yet used to their new home. Put the habitat in a dark, quiet place overnight to let the ants become accustomed. In a few days you should begin see some tunnels. Widen the starter holes a bit if you do not see any tunnels after a week. On average, your ants will live one to three months.

Restocking Your Gel Colony

If you want to put new ants in your Gel Colony, be sure to remove as many of the original occupants as possible. Also remove as much litter as you can. There is no need to add new gel. The new ants will explore existing tunnels and build new ones. Please visit www.unclemilton.com (click on “customer service”) for information on ordering ants and supplies.

Don't Start a War!

Don't ever mix your ants or you will start a war. While ants in a colony are very cooperative with each other, they will fight with ants from another colony. The ants we send you will all be from the same colony, so they will all get along.

If you gather your own ants, be sure they all come from the same place or they will fight. When you find a big group of ants all living and working together, they are most likely from the same colony.

Don't Bake Your Ants!

When the sun shines directly on your ant habitat it becomes like an oven, and your ants could perish from the heat. Keep the habitat away from any window where the sun shines directly on it.

Don't freeze your ants either, by leaving the habitat outside in cold weather. Ants don't like extremes in temperature. A room temperature between 68° to 72°F (20° to 22°C) is ideal.

Ants Are Neat

Ants are very clean creatures. You will see them grooming themselves and each other. They use stiff hairs on their forelegs like brushes to clean their antennae, heads and other parts of their bodies. While cleaning themselves and each other, they leave a scent that identifies members of the same colony. Ants can tell the difference between a nestmate and an unwelcome visitor by their scent.

Ants do not allow litter to pile up inside their nest. All the waste from the colony is gathered up regularly and hauled away by nest-keeping ants to a dump site.

Ants Are Industrious

Each ant in a colony has its own special job, and every job is important. Deep below the surface of a natural nest, nurse ants take care of the queen, eggs and larvae, nest-builders dig tunnels and chambers, and nest-keepers keep the nest clean. On the surface, guard ants patrol for predators and foragers gather food.

In some species, the younger ants work underground and the older ones work on the surface. In other species, different sized ants do different jobs: smaller ants work inside the nest, caring for the queen, eggs and larvae, middle-sized ants do nest-building and most of the foraging for food, and the largest ants are guards protecting the colony from predators and invading ants.

If extra workers are needed for a really big job, ants might switch from one task to another. For instance, if foragers find a good food source, some of the builders underground will stop digging and come up to help. If there is a particularly difficult underground tunneling project to complete, some of the outside foragers will come down to assist.

Ants Are Strong








Ants are incredibly strong for their size. An ant is able to pick up objects up to fifty times its own weight and carry it in its mandibles for long distances. That would be like an average-sized human carrying a five-ton boulder across the neighborhood by his teeth! For extra-heavy loads, ants work in teams.














Ants are also very speedy creatures. If you could run as fast as an ant can for its size, you would be able to sprint twice as fast as the world's fastest human!

Ants Are Good for the Environment

Ants perform many important functions in the world's ecosystems. They are exceptional earth movers. Ants enrich, irrigate and aerate more soil than any other animal in the world, including earthworms. Ants are major recyclers of organic waste. Also, ants are a major food source for many animals like birds, reptiles and amphibians.

Amazing Ant Facts

-  Ants have been around since dinosaurs lived!
-  There are currently about 12,000 known species of ants!
-  There may be 10,000 more species yet to be discovered!
-  There are as many as ten million billion ants in the world right at this moment!
-  There are more than one and a half million ants to every human on Earth!
-  Ants account for 10 percent of the weight of all the land-dwelling animals combined!
-  Ants can be found on every continent... except Antarctica!

-  Ants use their antennae to touch, taste and smell!
-  Ants have a better sense of smell than dogs!
-  Ants have two stomachs!
-  The trap-jaw ant has the fastest jaw in the west (as well as anywhere else)!
-  A harvester ant nest can contain tens of thousands of members, and other kinds can contain half a million!
-  A harvester ant nest can be fifteen feet deep!
-  Harvesters have only one queen to a colony; others can have more than one!
-  In Japan, a super-colony of 45,000 interconnected nests of red wood ants has a million queens and hundreds of millions of workers, and it takes up an entire square mile!
-  Some queens can live forty years or more!
-  An ant is able to lift loads of up to fifty times its own weight!
-  An ant typically carries objects that equal its own weight or less!
-  The smallest ant in the world is the tropical Carebara ant, which is about 3/100 of an inch (.75mm) long!
-  The largest ant in the world is the African driver ant, which is about one and a half inches (38mm) long!

KEEP THESE INSTRUCTIONS FOR FUTURE REFERENCE — DO NOT DISCARD

Questions? Comments? Please contact us. We can help!
1-888-742-2484 or go to www.unclemilton.com

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