

Atta cephalotes

(Linnaeus, 1758)

Hairy-headed leafcutter ant

The classic leafcutter: shiny red-orange workers of every size carry cut leaf pieces home to feed a living fungus garden.



Photo: a6475, CC BY-SA 4.0



At a glance



NEST TEMPERATURE

23–27 °C

In the nest



NEST HUMIDITY

85–95 %

In the nest



HIBERNATION

Not needed



NUPTIAL FLIGHTS

Apr – Jul

After rain



WORKERS

2–12 mm

majors up to 18 mm



QUEEN

22–30 mm

One queen



COLONY SIZE

No data yet

Growth: Very fast



ESCAPE RISK

High

Escape artists: use a closed outworld and a good barrier



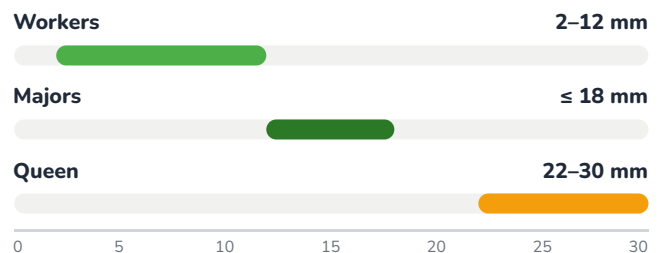
Year at a glance



Months in the native range of the species. The weather decides the exact days, and colonies kept indoors can follow a different rhythm.



Sizes on the same scale



Care at a glance

FOOD

Fresh leaves

Sugar

BEST NESTS

1. Acrylic nest
2. Naturalistic setup

WHY THIS RATING

- ✓ Fully claustral: the queen needs no food until her first workers arrive
- ✓ No hibernation to manage
- ⚠ A real escape artist that needs an escape-proof setup
- ⚠ Needs a fungus garden fed with fresh leaves every day
- ⚠ Grows very fast and needs plenty of protein and space



Notes from keepers

TIP

Give the fungus air movement, not only holes in the lid. The garden gives off CO₂, which sinks, and in one keeper's tank with a single vent at the top the fungus was torn down until more ventilation was added, and experienced keepers advise vents high and low. A small hood over the garden lets the ants build their own humid microclimate; keep liquid water off the fungus and go easy on watery foods such as lettuce.

WATCH OUT

Heat is a bigger danger than a cool room, and the room thermometer is misleading. One keeper saw the garden shrink week after week and the brood vanish after a heat wave in the room, and the queen of that long-kept colony was later found dead; other keepers report the garden shrinking whenever it gets too warm. Put a probe thermometer inside the fungus chamber, keep heaters from touching the garden and plan for summer cooling.