

Messor barbarus

(Linnaeus, 1767)

Harvester ant

A calm, clumsy seed harvester with huge-headed majors, and my top pick for beginners.



At a glance



NEST TEMPERATURE

21–26 °C

In the nest



NEST HUMIDITY

50–60 %

Seed granaries: 10–40 %



HIBERNATION

12–16 °C

Oct – Mar



NUPTIAL FLIGHTS

Sep – Nov

After rain



WORKERS

3–8 mm

majors up to 14 mm



QUEEN

14–17 mm

One queen



COLONY SIZE

Reaches 1,000 workers

Growth: Very fast



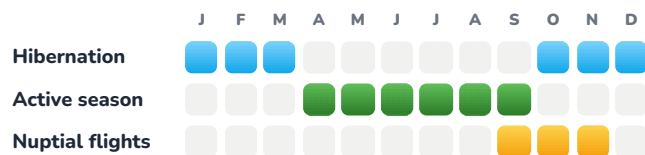
ESCAPE RISK

Low

Calm ants that rarely try to escape



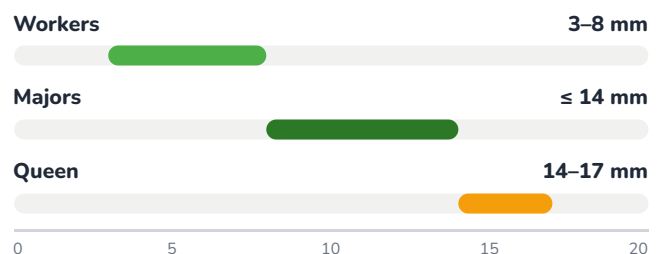
Year at a glance



Months for temperate Europe and the Mediterranean. The weather decides the exact days, so flights can come earlier or later where you live.



Sizes on the same scale



Care at a glance

FOOD

Sugar

Insects

Seeds

BEST NESTS

1. Ytong nest
2. Acrylic nest
3. Naturalistic setup

WHY THIS RATING

- ✓ Calm workers that rarely try to escape
- ✓ Fully claustral: the queen needs no food until her first workers arrive
- ✓ Stores seeds, so a missed feeding is not a problem
- ⚠ Needs a humidity gradient, with dry granaries and humid brood chambers
- ⚠ Grows very fast and needs plenty of protein and space



From my colonies

TIP

Give the nest a humidity gradient: dry granaries keep the seeds from sprouting or going moldy, while the brood needs the humid chambers.

WATCH OUT

The workers can chew through Ytong, so keep a Ytong nest inside a closed plastic or glass enclosure.