

Messor capitatus

(Latreille, 1798)

European seed harvesting ant

A glossy black seed harvester with big-headed majors that grind tough seeds into ant bread on dry, rocky ground.



Photo: Philipp Hoenle (myrmecophil), CC0 1.0

At a glance



NEST TEMPERATURE

22–28 °C

In the nest



NEST HUMIDITY

50–60 %

Seed granaries: 30–50 %



HIBERNATION

10–15 °C

Dec – Feb



NUPTIAL FLIGHTS

Sep – Nov

After rain



WORKERS

4–8 mm

majors up to 13 mm



QUEEN

13–15 mm

One queen



COLONY SIZE

Reaches 5,000 workers

Growth: Fast

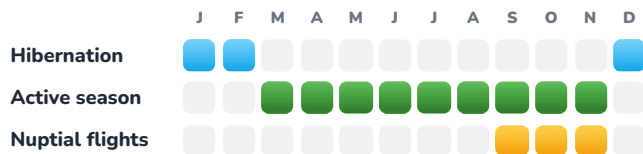


ESCAPE RISK

Low

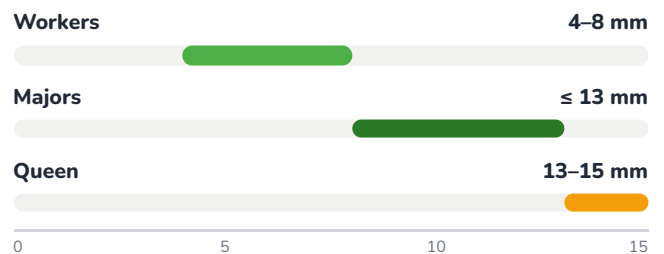
Calm ants that rarely try to escape

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

Seeds

Insects

Sugar

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

Notes from keepers

TIP

Give the first workers small seeds such as dandelion or grass seeds, which even the smallest of them can crush on their own. The queen herself can help crack the harder seeds that the first workers cannot open yet.

WATCH OUT

They are strong diggers that tunnel through Ytong and softened plaster, mostly where it is damp. Leave a thick wall between the chambers and the glass.