

Messor ibericus

Santschi, 1925

Iberian harvester ant

A hairy brown seed harvester of southern Europe whose queens raise hybrid workers by cloning the males of another species.



Photo: Jonghyun Park (clurarit), CC BY 4.0

At a glance



NEST TEMPERATURE
22–28 °C

In the nest



NEST HUMIDITY
40–60 %

Seed granaries: 30–50 %



HIBERNATION
10–15 °C

Nov – Feb



NUPTIAL FLIGHTS
Apr – Jun



WORKERS
4–8 mm

majors up to 10 mm



QUEEN
9–10 mm

One or more queens



COLONY SIZE
Reaches 3,500 workers

Growth: Fast



ESCAPE RISK
Low

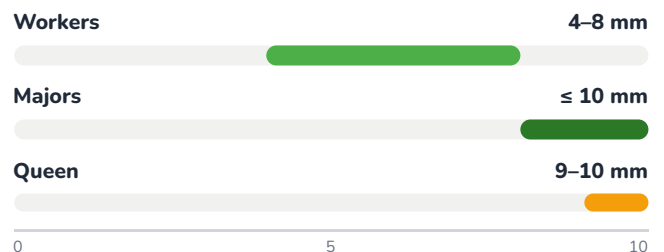
Calm ants that rarely try to escape

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. Sandwich nest
3. Acrylic nest

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

A warm, fairly dry nest suits it. The team behind the 2025 Nature study kept 65 colonies in a room at 25 °C and 40% humidity and fed them grass seeds. Add a water tube or one damp corner, but keep the seed store dry, because seeds that get too damp sprout and the workers then carry them out.

WATCH OUT

A queen picked up next to a nest may never get started alone. In Italy, winged queens were seen waiting at the nest entrance instead of flying off, and keepers report that they mate on the ground, then go back into the nest or leave with a group of workers, and rarely found a colony alone. Collect a few workers with such a queen, or start from a colony that already has some.