

Myrmica rubra

(Linnaeus, 1758)

European fire ant

A feisty red ant of damp meadows that lives in sprawling multi-queen colonies and defends its nest with a nettle-like sting.

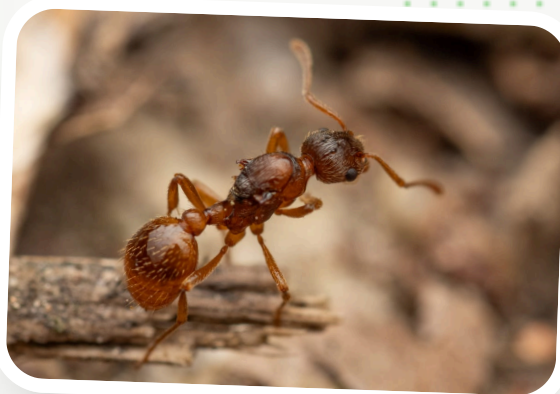


Photo: Philipp Hoenle (myrmecophil), CC0 1.0

At a glance



NEST TEMPERATURE

18–25 °C

In the nest



NEST HUMIDITY

50–70 %

In the nest



HIBERNATION

5–8 °C

Oct – Mar



NUPTIAL FLIGHTS

Aug – Sep

Calm weather



WORKERS

4–6 mm

All the same size



QUEEN

5–7 mm

Several queens



COLONY SIZE

Reaches 10,000 workers

Growth: Fast

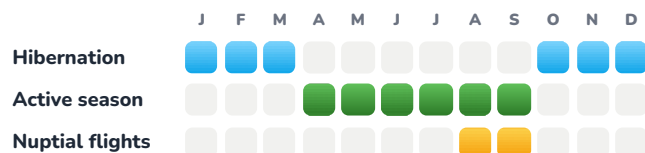


ESCAPE RISK

Medium

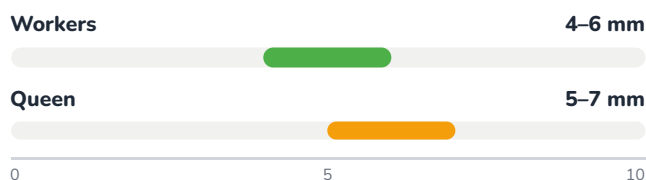
Keep an escape barrier on the outworld

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

BEST NESTS

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

WHY THIS RATING

- ⚠ Curious workers: keep an escape barrier on the outworld
- ⚠ Semi-claustral: the founding queen has to be fed
- ⚠ Needs a cold hibernation, for example in a fridge
- ⚠ Colonies get huge and need room to expand
- ⚠ The workers can sting

Notes from keepers

TIP

Keep the nest damp all the time. Keepers favor plaster nests for this species, and a Ytong block that dries out too fast does better standing in a tray of water, so the ants can choose between a wet bottom and a drier top.

WATCH OUT

Heat and dryness are what kill this species. A warm room or a nest that dries out can cause sudden die-offs, so keep the colony in the coolest spot of the home and never let the water reservoir run empty.