

Native ants of Adelaide and the Mount Lofty Ranges

Identification chart

Ants are amazing! They existed before dinosaurs yet have more complex ways of communicating with chemicals than any other animal.

Ants live just about everywhere in Australia and they are very important to our environment and economy. Many ants are natural pest-control agents, preying on garden and agricultural pests, while others help native plants to germinate by moving their seeds underground; any seeds that go uneaten are given the perfect climate for germination.

Subfamily DOLICHODERINAE

Meat Ant (*Iridomyrmex* spp.)

- Highly aggressive towards ants from other colonies and species. Fights can last for days, with gangs of workers standing on their front legs and kicking each other with their hind legs.
- Important role in balancing the food chain and breaking down carrion.



Subfamily FORMICINAE

Sugar Ant (*Camponotus* spp.)

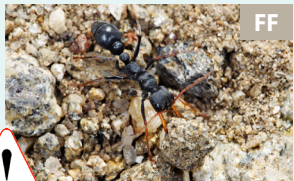
- The 'caste' of one species has large, flat heads and blocks the nest entrance. Nest mates stroke the guard's head to be allowed in.
- Young ants tend the larvae, then become foragers when older.
- Queen can live 20+ years.



Subfamily MYRMECIINAE

Hopper Ant (*Myrmecia pilosula*)

- Has a distinctive hopping movement when threatened.
- Adults feed on nectar and plant juices, yet feed their larvae on the animals they kill.
- More people in the Adelaide Hills are treated for bites from this ant than any other.



Inch Ant (*Myrmecia pyriformis*)

- One of Australia's largest ants.
- Able to spot and follow intruders from up to 1 m.
- Important role in balancing the food chain and breaking down carrion.



Caution: These ants can bite or sting you and this may cause anaphylactic shock in some people.

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Subfamily MYRMICINAE

Heart Bottom Ant (*Crematogaster* spp.)

- Look out for their trails — they look like tiny narrow ditches.
- Sometimes called 'Cocktail Ants' as they lift their abdomen when alarmed.
- Hunt for most of their food including termites, wasps and grasshoppers.



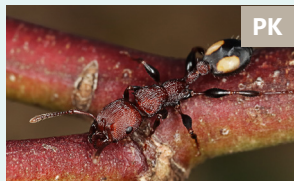
Big-headed Ant (*Pheidole* spp.)

- Two different worker forms or 'castes' in colony: 'minor' (small heads) and 'major' (big heads).
- Minor workers are among the world's smallest ants – as small as 0.75mm.
- General scavengers and predators, particularly fond of seeds.



Muscleman Patch Ant (*Podomyrma* spp.)

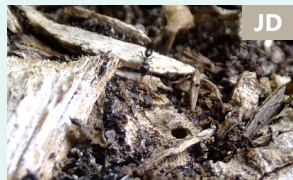
- Easily identified by cream patches on abdomen and swollen upper limbs.
- Almost entirely arboreal, these ants build their nests in trees and bushes.
- Primarily predators, feeding on other invertebrates, including ants. Like Green-head Ants (see below), some species tend aphids.



Subfamily PONERINAE

Green-head Ant (*Rhytidoponera* spp.)

- 'Farmer' ants that protect aphids and the plants they live on, in return for the honeydew excreted by the aphids.
- Only ants and humans are known to tame and farm other animals.



Text and identification key originally developed by Archie McArthur (SA Museum), Jasmin Packer and Joel Driver (both University of Adelaide). Thanks also to Rose Dow (Arbury Park Outdoor School) for her generous support. NRM Education would like to dedicate this chart to Archie McArthur.

Photographs kindly provided by James Smith (JS), Farhan Bokhari (FB), Joel Driver (JD), Ajay Narendra (AN), Martin Lagerwey (ML), Hectonichus (H), Eli Sarnat (ES), Shannon Hartman (SH), Fir0002[Flagstaffotos (FF), Tony [flickr] (TF), Mario Muscedere & James Traniello (MM), Sam Ryan (SR), Patrick Kavanagh (PK), Greg Coote (GC), April Nobile (AN), Estella Ortega [www.antweb.org] (EO).

Native ants of Adelaide and the Mount Lofty Ranges

Identification key

1

Short jaws



go to

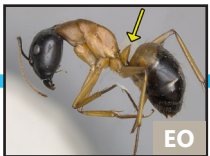
2

Long jaws



2

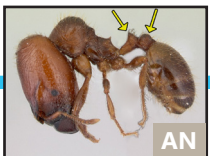
One node



go to

3

Two nodes



3

tip of abdomen slit-like



Meat Ant
(*Iridomyrmex* spp.)

DOLICHODERINAE

nests in pre-existing cavities in trees



Southern Plug Sugar Ant
(*Camponotus gasseri*)

orange-brown thorax and legs, nests in heavy soils



Banded Sugar Ant
(*Camponotus consobrinus*)

FORMICINAE

nests in sandy soils, often around trunks of trees or shrubs



Brown Bearded Sugar Ant
(*Camponotus terebrans*)

band around abdomen, green head and body



Green-head Ant
(*Rhytidoponera* spp.)

PONERINAE

bright yellow jaws



Hopper Ant
(*Myrmecia pilosula*)

light brown jaws and legs



Inch Ant
(*Myrmecia pyriformis*)

MYRMECIINAE

node attached near top of heart-shaped abdomen



Heart Bottom Ant
(*Crematogaster* spp.)

big and small workers in and out of nest



Big-headed Ant
(*Pheidole* spp.)

MYRMICINAE

cream patch on abdomen



Muscleman Patch Ant
(*Podomyrma* spp.)