

User Manual for Formicariums

Green House / Spring House / Forest / White House

Keeping *Messor barbarus* Ants

Preparing the Ants for Moving into the Formicarium

One of the most common beginner mistakes is trying to move a colony into a formicarium that is too large for its size. The minimum colony size suitable for each formicarium is:

Green House Formicarium, 6-Chamber White House:

queen plus 15 workers.

Spring House Formicarium, Forest Formicarium, 12-Chamber White House:

queen plus 30 workers.

If your colony is smaller, it should continue growing inside a test tube setup before being moved into the formicarium. Feeding should be done using the same food that will later be used in the formicarium, but served inside the test tube. Remember to provide the ants with water as well.

A common mistake is placing a very small colony inside a nest that is too large.

Moving the Colony into the Nest (Arena)

1. If the colony was shipped by mail, it is recommended not to open the test tube for 1–2 days after delivery, as the ants may be stressed from transportation. Allow them time to acclimate before relocation.
2. Hydrate the water reservoir (the sponge section inside the nest) using one pipette injection.
3. Open the roof and arrange the arena décor by adding sand, gravel, and natural decorative elements.

Important! Do not pour all the sand from the bag into the arena. The maximum sand layer thickness should be 2–3 mm. Too much sand may cause the ants to dig in and become invisible. The remaining sand can be used later to refresh the arena.

4. Carefully remove the cotton plug from the test tube and place the test tube inside the arena before closing the house. If the test tube does not fit inside the arena, move the ants using tubing connected to the side entrance.
5. Cover the nest to provide darkness during the relocation process.

Warning: Do not heat the nest with a lamp and do not place the formicarium in direct sunlight, for example on a windowsill.

The relocation process may take up to 2 weeks, although it usually happens within one day. The most important thing is that the *Messor barbarus* queen moves into the nest. Once the queen settles in the new nest, you can enjoy observing the colony.

Hydration

Avoid excessive hydration. Water should not remain standing inside the hydration chamber or leak from the sides. The amount of water depends on temperature, season, and evaporation rate.

One pipette injection every 3–4 days is recommended.

Feeding the Ants

Messor barbarus ants should be fed a seed mix (for example grass seeds, flax seeds, or poppy seeds) along with protein food.

Protein food should include insects such as mealworms, roaches, banana crickets, or other feeder insects. Protein is essential for colony growth because it allows the queen to produce brood. Live insects should be cut in half before feeding to avoid unnecessary “battles” between the ants and live prey, which could harm the colony.

Food should be placed in the arena, where worker ants will carry it into the nest.

Remember – ants are not vegetarians!

Additional Tips

1. Regularly refill the water reservoir. You may also purchase an additional external water feeder, which is especially useful during longer absences. If the ants frequently use the additional water feeder, it may indicate that the nest reservoir is not hydrated enough.
 2. Remove waste from the arena regularly to prevent mold and microorganisms from developing.
 3. Choose a suitable location for the formicarium, away from stress sources such as televisions or dining tables.
 4. Provide privacy for the ants – around two-thirds of the nest should remain covered.
 5. Maintain the correct temperature – at least 22–23°C (72–73°F).
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More Information About Ant Keeping

1. Visit AntCenter.com.pl – “Instructions” section
2. YouTube channel: [ANTCENTER](https://www.youtube.com/channel/ANTCENTER)
3. Ant keeping support phone number: 728 215 422 (available on weekdays from 9 AM to 4 PM)
4. Blog: swiatmrowek.pl

