

## Ant societies

Ants live in your garden, in deserts and rain forests — anywhere but the coldest and highest places on Earth. They are successful, because they set up amazing societies called colonies in which every ant member has a role.



Ants are social insects. They live in large groups called colonies which are made up of the queen, the males and the worker ants.

The job of a queen is to lay millions of eggs. She is the largest ant in the colony.

The male ants have wings. Their only role is to mate with the queen. After they have mated, the males do not usually live for long.

Most ants in the colony are workers and they are all female. Worker ants build and clean the nest, search for food for the colony and feed the larvae (young). Some of the workers are called soldier ants because they protect the colony if it is attacked by another creature.

As well as being highly organised, ants are also good communicators. For example, worker ants mark a line to where they have found a source of food using a chemical called pheromone. This helps the rest of the colony follow the shortest route to find food.



Some species of ants have developed a helpful relationship with small sap sucking insects called aphids. After digesting plant sap, aphids give out a sweet sticky liquid called honeydew which ants eat. In return the ants protect the aphids they feed from by attacking any other insect who tries to prey on them.