In 2002, Tom Rasberry, a professional pest-management provider from Pearland, discovered a population of a new pest near Pasadena, Texas, in Harris County. Huge numbers of this new ant literally covered the landscape in industrial parks and residences. The Center for Urban and Structural Entomology within the Department of Entomology at Texas A&M University has identified the ant as a new exotic invasive pest in Texas, but the species’ identification and country of origin are still unresolved. It is now commonly called the Rasberry crazy ant, *Nylanderia* sp. nr. *pubens* (previously in the genus *Paratrechina*). Currently, little is known regarding the biology or control of this ant. The ant population has begun to spread, often through human assistance.

**Where are they found?**

As of 2009, high numbers of the Rasberry crazy ants have been found in the southern part of Texas. As of November 2009, infestations have been confirmed in Bexar, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Hardin, Jefferson, Jim Hogg, Liberty, Montgomery, Orange, Walker and Wharton counties. New infestations are suspected beyond these areas. The most current distribution is posted at [http://UrbanEntomology.tamu.edu](http://UrbanEntomology.tamu.edu). These ants can be transported through movement of almost any infested container or material. Thus, the movement of potted plants, mulch, garbage, yard debris, bags or loads of compost or bales of hay by car, truck, railroad or airplane can transport ant colonies and result in new areas of infestation.

**What is their pest status?**

Recently, the ant was also found in beehives causing the bees to abscond the hives, and for this reason, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) considers the Rasberry crazy ant to be an agricultural pest. However, no information is yet available on any potential damage to crops or adverse economic effects in infested lands. Crazy ants can hitchhike on nursery plants and other landscaping materials. Furthermore, state law requires nursery products and premises to be free of pests and diseases. Therefore, TDA may require a treatment or other appropriate regulatory measures upon detection of crazy ants on nursery products and/or in premises. Nursery managers and retail garden store managers are encouraged to keep their premises free of crazy ants.

**What do they do?**

In infested areas around the Houston area, large numbers of Rasberry crazy ants have caused great annoyance to residents and businesses. Because one multi-queen colony can number in the millions, ants can blanket the ground and trees, creating uncomfortable situations that prevent residents from enjoying time outdoors. Pets and livestock may avoid the area due to the constantly crawling crazy ants.

Rasberry crazy ants have been found accumulating by the thousands in electrical equipment, causing short circuits and equipment failure. In some documented cases, the ants have caused tens of thousands of dollars in damage and remedial costs. Critical electrical and computer systems in traffic signals, businesses, schools, hospitals and airports could be affected.

**Do they sting or bite?**

Although these ants do not have stingers, worker ants possess a structure called an acidopore on the end of their abdomens which can excrete chemicals for defense or attack. The Rasberry crazy ants are capable of biting, and their bite causes a relatively sharp pain that quickly fades.
Fireants in areas of heavy infestation.

Chickensto die of asphyxia due to ants displacing all other ant species. In addition, serious pest in South America, reportedly related species of crazy ant has been a serious pest in South America, reportedly displacing all other ant species. In addition, the South American crazy ant pest caused chickens to die of asphyxia due to ants obstructing their nasal passages. Larger animals, such as cattle, have been attacked around the eyes, nasal area and hooves.

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What effect do they have on wildlife?

Very little is currently known about the wildlife impact from Rasberry crazy ants. If you observe any effect on wildlife, please report it to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department by submitting the “Wildlife Impact Report” form found at http://UrbanEntomology.tamu.edu. Also, please report any situations where the crazy ants are affecting agricultural animals, including invasion and loss of wild and domestic honey bee hives.

Wildlife such as songbirds can be irritated by the Rasberry crazy ants. Masses of crazy ants covering the ground and trees likely affect ground and tree-nesting birds and other small animals, and cause wildlife to move out of the area.

The ants are even displacing red imported fire ants in areas of heavy infestation. However, after experiencing the Rasberry crazy ant, most residents prefer the fire ant.

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Identifying characteristics and behavior

Proper identification of Rasberry crazy ants by a specialist is essential.

If you have seen these ants, please SUBMIT A SAMPLE FOR IDENTIFICATION by the Center for Urban and Structural Entomology. Visit http://UrbanEntomology.tamu.edu for an “Identification Request Form” and instructions on submitting ants for identification. The process through the center is free, requiring only postage from you.

Until better control methods are developed, you can help control Rasberry crazy ants by identifying colonies and discouraging the ants from nesting on your property.

Rasberry crazy ants:

• Are about 1/8-inch long and reddish-brown in color, not black.
• Are social insects that live in large colonies containing many queen ants, worker ants and brood consisting of larval and pupal stages. Colony size can be in the millions, infesting entire subdivisions, industrial sites, agricultural operations, parks and wildlife habitats.
• Do not construct hills or mounds like fire ants, and do not emerge to the surface from underground nests through central openings. Instead, colonies can be found under or within almost any object or void, including piles of debris, stumps, fallen logs, leaf litter, soil, concrete, rocks or potted plants.
• Primarily form nests outdoors, but can roam indoors from outdoor nests.
• Form loose foraging trails as well as forage randomly (non-trailing) and crawl rapidly and erratically (hence the description “crazy” ant).
• Eat almost any acceptable food item. Worker ants commonly “tend” sucking hemipterous insects such as aphids, scale insects, whiteflies, mealybugs, and others that excrete a sugary liquid called “honeydew.” Worker crazy ants are also attracted to nectar-rich parts of plants, damaged and overripe fruit, hummingbird feeders and will consume other insects and small vertebrates for protein.
• Are hard to spot during cooler winter months. In spring, foraging activity begins and colonies grow, producing millions of workers that increase dramatically by mid-summer (July-August). Ant numbers remain high through fall (October-November).

What can you do to prevent and control them?

The best way to prevent a Rasberry crazy ant infestation is to be “ant-aware.”

• Report suspicious ant problems, and have the ants identified by a specialist.
• Avoid bringing ant-infested articles onto your property. Carefully inspect new plant materials, mulch or soil brought onto your property.
• If Rasberry crazy ants are detected, practice good sanitation techniques by removing potential nesting sites, such as piles of debris (mulch, wood etc.) from around buildings, or stacks of debris from the property, taking care not to spread the ants in the process.

Many of the typical control tactics that work for other ants do not provide adequate control of the Rasberry crazy ant. The worker ants are not attracted to most bait products used for fire ants and other ants. Because colonies predominantly nest outdoors, indoor treatments are not effective in controlling ants that venture inside structures.

However, there are treatments available that offer temporary “buffer zones” around homes and other structures in urban areas. These products must be applied by a licensed operator only and are not readily available to consumers. After treatment, or when making multiple applications over time, piles of dead ants must be swept or moved out of the area in order to treat the surface(s) underneath, being careful not to sweep or blow away a treated surface such as soil.

Carefully inspect new plant materials, mulch or soil brought onto your property.

If you suspect your house or property is infested with Rasberry crazy ants, call a professional pest-control provider. These experienced licensed professionals can offer the most current, successful alternatives that are unavailable to consumers. After treatment, or when making multiple applications over time, piles of dead ants must be swept or moved out of the area in order to treat the surface(s) underneath, being careful not to sweep or blow away a treated surface such as soil.