



BWARS



Map showing the location of **known** UK *Lasius neglectus* colonies



Tending a scale bug



Lasius neglectus workers attacking a *Lasius niger* worker (bottom right)

The Invasive Garden Ant (*Lasius neglectus*)

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Background and Ecology

Lasius neglectus is a widespread invasive pest in Europe, most likely originating from Asia-minor. It is known to be established at six locations in the UK but is probably under-recorded. Colonies can spread over several hectares and consist of multiple cooperating nests and hundreds of thousands of queens. *Lasius neglectus* is a highly successful forager; collecting honeydew from a range of insects and exploiting other resources such as plant nectar.

Impacts

Lasius neglectus has severe local effects on the diversity of invertebrate communities. Native ants are excluded from the core regions of colonies and ground-foraging groups including beetles and woodlice are also affected. The abundance of plant sap feeding insects such as aphids tends to increase, as these taxa are farmed by the ants for honeydew. *Lasius neglectus* also invades buildings where it is a nuisance, but workers don't sting or spray formic acid and are too small to bite humans.

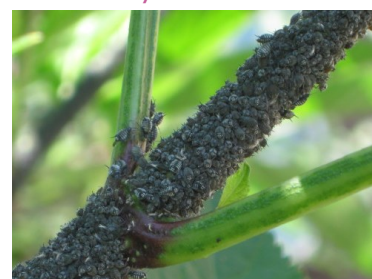
Spread

Unlike many native ant species, the queens of *Lasius neglectus* rarely fly. This means that the spread of the species via natural means is very slow (only a few metres per year). However, the soil in potted plants is an ideal nest site for the ants, so the movement of plants from infested areas can result in accidental human-mediated dispersal to new locations. As a result, *Lasius neglectus* is usually found in disturbed, urban and semi-urban habitats or places with a high level of plant exchange such as botanic gardens.

Identification

Lasius neglectus workers are brown ants, slightly smaller (3-6mm) and lighter in colour than those of the common garden ant *Lasius niger* (5-8mm). Any ants that match this description and are unusually abundant or persistent in buildings, should definitely be investigated. Workers sometimes form very densely populated trails on tree trunks and are often very abundant around honeydew-producing insects. Identification should be confirmed from voucher specimens by someone familiar with this species (see contacts).

- * The UK's first invasive ant
- * Forms supercolonies
- * Negative impacts on native invertebrates
- * Highly effective forager
- * Human-mediated dispersal
- * Probably under-recorded



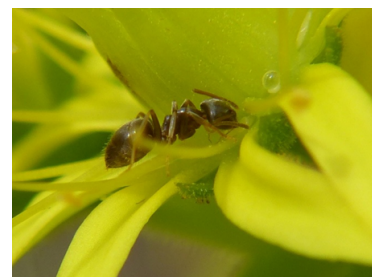
Aphid populations increase in the presence of *Lasius neglectus*



Lasius neglectus worker tending nymphs of the (also non-native) psyllid *Ctenarytaina eucalypti*



Queen, worker and brood



Collecting floral nectar

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For further information, submission of records, or ID confirmation, contact: pbb502@york.ac.uk

Photos: Phillip Buckham-Bonnett, Phil Roberts, Peter Mayhew