

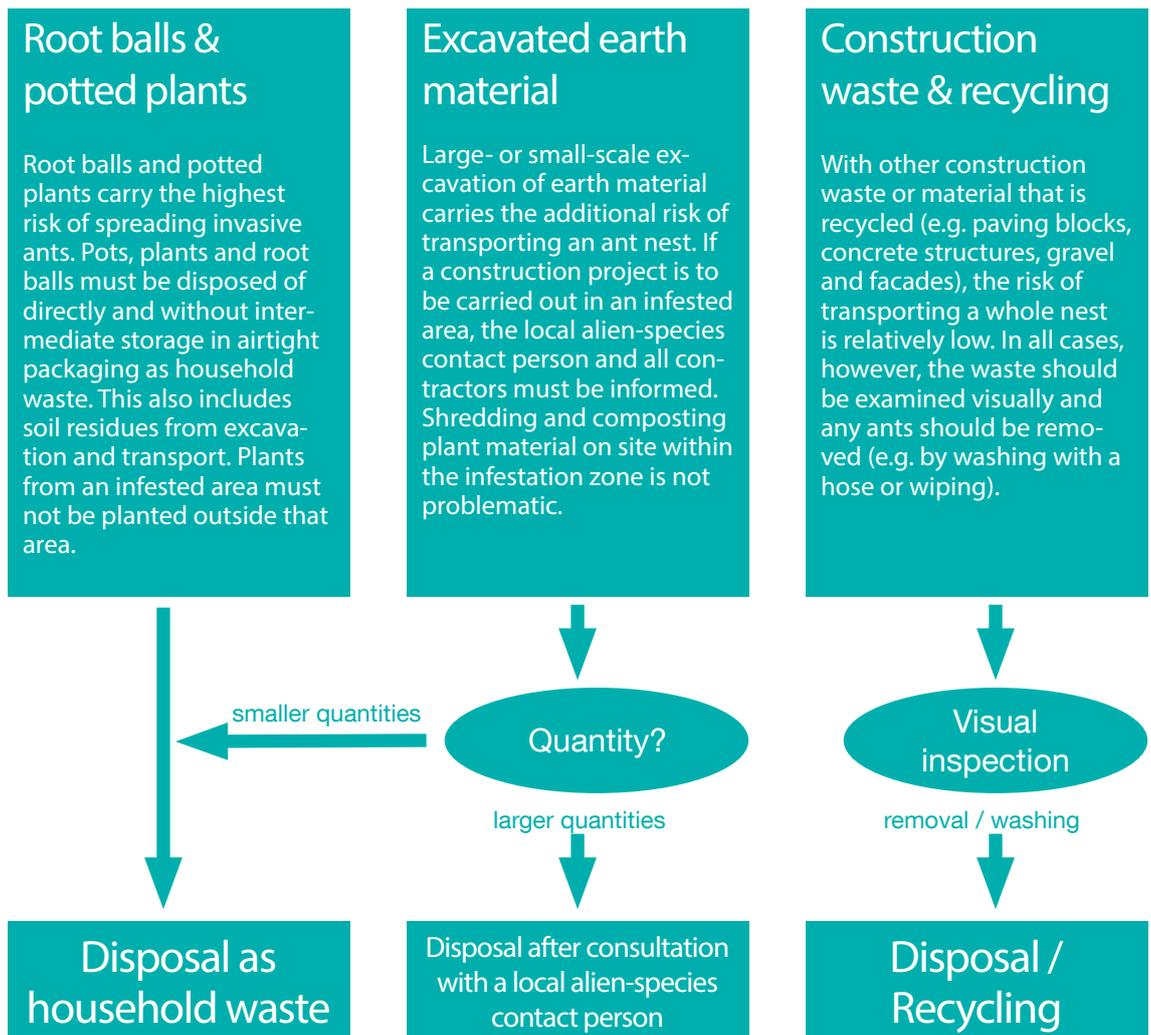
Infestation of construction and garden waste by invasive ants: guidelines for private individuals

Version: June 2022

Invasive ants can be transported in construction and garden waste and can cause serious damage. Careful handling of such waste can reduce this risk.

- Dispose of particularly high-risk types of waste correctly.
- Inspect all waste visually for ants and remove any that are found.
- If any uncertainties or questions arise, consult a specialist immediately.

Construction and garden waste infested with invasive ants: handling and disposal



If there is any uncertainty, please contact the alien-species contact person in your municipality (visit zh.ch/neobiota for information for private individuals) or write to neobiota@bd.zh.ch.

Information on invasive ants

In the canton of Zurich, two problematic alien ant species are known to occur to date: *Lasius neglectus* (invasive garden ant) and *Tapinoma magnum*.

Problem Why are these ants a problem?

Both species form so-called polygynous nests, i.e. there are several queens per nest. In addition, supercolonies may form. A supercolony is a complex consisting of multiple cooperating nests. Normally different ant colonies fight each other, but this is not the case in a supercolony. Through cooperation, it is possible for the ants to reach very large numbers (>800/m²). In Spain, a supercolony of another alien ant species has been estimated to have more than 110 million workers and 350,000 queens. Supercolonies lead to many more offspring, and controlling the supercolonies becomes more difficult than with conventional ant infestations. If a queen is killed by control measures, the infestation does not cease because many more queens are still present in the supercolony.

Damage What kind of damage do ants cause?

- Sometimes a serious nuisance in homes and gardens
- Suppression of other ants and insects
- Aphids are protected by ants in exchange for the honeydew they produce, and can therefore also reach very high densities
- Damage to facades and electrical systems
- Hygiene problems in food and health establishments

Spread How do these ants spread?

With both species, the queens do not fly out of an existing colony to mate, instead migrating via the ground. As a result, they spread much more slowly than do ant species with functional wings. **The main route of dispersal is via potted and garden plants or earth material moved by humans.** This is why it is so important to be extremely careful when removing and disposing of material from infested areas. It only takes one undetected fertilized queen to transport the ants to a new area.



difficult to control (*Tapinoma magnum* depicted, © Claude Lebas).

How can I recognize alien ants?

These species cannot be distinguished from their native relatives with the naked eye and without expert knowledge. If control is not successful or if there are an unusually large number of ants, it is recommended that an insect control specialist be consulted.

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