

What Kinds of Ants Sting or Bite?

Stinging ants can leave body parts littered with small annoying bumps or large excruciating swells. These itty bitty members of the Formicidae family may be tiny but an ant sting can pack a powerful punch. This does not mean, however, that all ants sting.

Ants are such resilient little creatures that they have managed to occupy virtually all parts of the world. To date, approximately 12,000 ant species roam the earth. Millions upon millions can make up a single colony. Despite their durability and ability to colonize by the millions, however, not all ants sting.

According to a Northern Territory Government fact sheet, some ants are capable of biting, some of stinging, and others are built to engage in biting and stinging as well. Ants included in the biting group comprise of green ants, meat ants, and Singapore ants. The fact sheet also states that the Darwin bull and the ginger are the most common stinging ants.

Although a normal characteristic of an ant is to have pinchers with which they can grab onto things, not all ants have stings. In order to be classified as stinging ants, stings must be located on the rear (abdomen) of the ants' bodies. Ants without stings cannot sting.

Although some ants are capable of biting and stinging this does not mean that they readily go about lashing out at others. Pavement ants, for instance, are capable of biting as well as stinging, however they do not commit these acts very often. When they do, the puncture usually has little impact on the victim.

On the opposite end of the spectrum lays the red imported fire

ants. These ants are native to South America and very aggressive. Their sting can be deadly.

Ants that do not sting include:

Argentine ants – This species of non-stinging ants come from Argentina and Brazil, produce millions of ants per colony, and are now common in many states including Washington, Oregon, Arizona, California, and Hawaii.

Green tree ants – These ants are so named because of their green abdomens. They prefer to build their nests in trees and shrubs. Green tree ants are useful for preying on garden pests. If left alone they usually mind their own business. If disturbed they may bite or spray formic acid, however, they do not sting.

Singapore ants – Although a non-stinging species, these ants will bite. Much worse, however is their tendency to setup camp just about anywhere in the home including electrical outlets. In so doing, they have caused fires due to chewing on electrical wires.

Coastal brown meat ants – These ants like to nest in wall cracks and crevices around the home including floors as well as walls. Coastal brown ants prefer meat products with high levels of fat as well as dead insects to other types of foods. If threatened they may bite, however, they do not sting.

Feeling one or more ants attached to a body part nipping away does not necessarily mean the ant is stinging. The ant could be biting. Ant bites tend to be minor compared to their stings.

When encountering an ant sting, the victim will likely feel much more than a little pinch. Just as with bees, ant stings are painful. The pain can be excruciating. The place on the body that receives an ant sting may swell up or at minimal form one or more small bumps (depending on the number of

stings).

Ants represent one of the unique species of animal life that comprise innumerable variations on their characteristics. The ability for some of these ants to sting, some to bite and others to do both keeps their populations growing strong around the earth.