



Amazing ants



Narrow-headed ant



This species of ant is one of the rarest in the UK, and can only be found in South Devon and the scattered forests of the Scottish Highlands. They love to eat honeydew, a sweet sticky liquid which can be found in small sap-sucking insects like the greenfly.

Did you know?

Narrow-headed ant queens live on average for around 27 years, and sometimes there is more than one queen in a colony.

Southern wood ant



Known as the 'red wood ant' or 'horse ant', this species are hunters with large biting jaws and the ability to defend itself by spraying acid. They build big nests out of soil, twigs, leaves and pine needles and can be found in a variety of habitats, from sunny spots in woodland to heath and moorland.

In spring, a new generation of males and females is raised, which take to the air to mate. Females that have been fertilised take to the skies to form their own colonies.

Did you know?

Their main source of food is honeydew, the sugary liquid secreted by small insects that feed on plant sap.

Red ant



Most common in the UK, these ants can be found in back gardens and will often make nests underneath logs, paving slabs or under a grass lawn.

Did you know?

The red ant has wings, and in the summer will swarm in the air. But be careful, they can give a nasty sting if provoked.



Yellow meadow ant



If you come across an anthill, it's more often than not a nest of yellow meadow ants. They form large soil domes above ground and can be spotted in grassland and sometimes back gardens, if the lawn has been left. They'll only leave the nest if disturbed, or during the warm summer months when winged males and females come together to mate.

Did you know?

This ant has a close relationship with the Chalkhill blue butterfly. The ant protects the butterfly larvae in return for the sugary substance the larvae secretes.

Black garden ant



A familiar sight, this is one of the most common ants you'll come across, and sometimes they'll venture indoors in the search for sugary foods to feast on. They can often be found making nests in your garden, under paving stones and in between brickwork.

The colony is usually made up of worker ants who collect food, look after the young and keep the nest clean, while the queen lays the eggs.

Did you know?

There can be as many as 15,000 black garden ants in a single colony.



Big beetle guide



Stag beetle



Largest of the beetle species in the UK, they prefer to live in woodlands but can also be found in parks, gardens, and hedgerows. The larvae live off rotting wood and it can take up to six years before they're a fully developed adult.

Once fully mature, the males use their impressive antler shaped jaws to attract a mate and will fight off other rivals with them, much like deer do. You can spot them flying on warm summer evenings during mating season. Despite taking years to grow, the lifespan of an adult is much shorter. Once the eggs have been laid (usually around August time), the adult beetle will die.

Did you know?

Their jaws are so big that it's not known if the beetle can eat when it's an adult, or whether they eat at all. If they do eat, it's likely that they feed on tree sap.

Oil beetle



These elusive beetles can be found in areas that are rich with wildflowers, and this is because they need pollen for their larvae. Bare patches of earth can signify a burrow, but they can also be spotted sunning themselves on paths.

Oil beetles will dig burrows underground near the nests of solitary bees. Once their eggs have hatched, the larvae wait on flowers for a host bee. They'll attach themselves to the bee and be taken back to the hive, where they'll feed on the bees stores of pollen and nectar.

Did you know?

These native oil beetles are in rapid decline, so restoring and creating suitable habits for them is a priority.



Wonderful world of ladybirds



7-spot ladybird



These ladybirds are a gardener's best friend, as they feed on small insects that nibble at garden plants. They can be found all over the UK year-round like many other species of ladybird. The bright colours of the ladybirds warn predators they are not a tasty snack, although some birds might still try.

Did you know?

When threatened, the 7-spot ladybird will secrete a yellow liquid which has a strong smell and can stain hands and clothing.

22-spot ladybird



You can find this striking yellow ladybird in many different habitats, from grassland, woodlands and gardens. Unlike its 7-spotted cousins, they prefer to eat fungus found on a variety of plants rather than hunting aphids.

Top tip

Ladybirds are great for the garden as they manage insects, so why not have a go at building a bug hotel for them?

Harlequin ladybird



Native to Asia, this ladybird was first introduced to the UK in 2004 and has thrived to become one of the most common species. It's often found in towns, parks and gardens and is one of the largest species.

Did you know?

The harlequin ladybird has a voracious appetite. It's threatening our native species as it can eat more prey than other ladybirds, and sometimes even other ladybirds' eggs and larvae.



Orange ladybird



You can spot this species of ladybird by its pale orange body and cream spots on its wing cases. It likes to feed on the mildew from sycamore and ash trees and can be spotted in woodlands and gardens. During the winter it hibernates in piles of fallen leaves, so you can usually spot them between April and October.

Did you know?

The orange ladybird is attracted to bright lights and can often be found in moth traps.

2-spot ladybird



Our most common species in the UK, the classic red and black markings of the 2-spotted ladybird are well known in our gardens. Like many other species, they feed on aphids, but these ladybirds spend the coldest part of the year hibernating in tree bark.

Did you know?

If you find any ladybirds indoors over the cold months of winter, it's most likely this particular one.



Fascinating facts about spiders



Garden spider



As their name suggests, these are the most common orb web building spider in UK gardens. They will wait patiently on their web for prey to fly into it, and know they've been lucky when they feel the vibrations of a stuck insect. They're easily recognisable by a white cross on their back.

Did you know?

A spider's web is made from spider silk and is remarkably light as well as extremely strong.

Flower crab spider



The flower crab spider is different from the rest of their species. Instead of weaving webs, they will lie in wait for their prey and camouflage themselves by changing their colour to match their surroundings.

Did you know?

These spiders move sideways like a crab, hence the name.

Wolf spider



The wolf spider gets its name from the way it hunts down its food. A ground hunting spider, it will attack prey by pouncing on them, just like a wolf. Commonly seen in gardens, you can spot them sunbathing or running across the ground.

Did you know?

Female wolf spiders carry newly hatched babies on their back for a few days, before the young float off using parachutes made from spider silk.



Giant house spider



The biggest species of spider can be found living in the fireplace, under the sofa or sometimes caught in the bath. They can be spotted in the autumn when the males are out looking for females, but you'll notice their webs in neglected corners of rooms, waiting for unsuspecting insects to fall into them.

Did you know?

Giant house spiders can go months without having to eat or drink and are the fastest invertebrate. They can run up to half a meter a second.



Impressive dragonflies



Common clubtail



These dragonfly takes to the skies in early May until July, and are easy to identify as it's the only UK species whose eyes do not join in the middle. You'll likely find them along rivers in southern England and Wales, such as the Thames, Arun, Wye, Dee, Teifi and Severn.

Did you know?

The larvae (or nymphs) live in the mud and silt of riverbeds for as much as three to five years before they moult and taking to the skies.

Common darter



One of the most commonly seen in the UK, they can live in ponds, lakes, rivers, and ditches. Darters are given their name for the way they hunt. They hover in one position until their ready to strike, then they then dart forwards to catch their prey.

Did you know?

In the summer, common darters can be seen almost anywhere, and are often perched with their wings facing the sun to warm up.

Golden-ringed dragonfly



The longest species, it's a keen hunter that preys on large insects like wasps, damselflies, beetles, bumblebees, and even other dragonflies. They live near small streams on moorland and heathland and can be spotted between May and September.

Did you know?

The larvae live on the bed of small streams and ambush prey as it swims by.



Emperor dragonfly



This particular dragonfly is known for its large size and iridescent blue colours, and is an impressive predator as it often catches its prey and eats them while flying.

Did you know?

They are drawn to new ponds and flooded gravel pits, and for the first few years it can be extremely common to spot larvae.



Busy life of bees



Honey bee



Makers of the sweet honey you buy in the shops, wild honeybee hives can be found in wooded places. The hive is made from wax honeycombs and can be filled with up to 50,000 bees. The queen of the nest lays the eggs while the worker bees care for the young. Each year a female bee will either take the place of her mother as the new queen, or they will leave the hive to start their own colony elsewhere.

Did you know?

In the winter the bees huddle together to maintain warmth and to protect the larvae, which feed on their rations of pollen and honey. If done properly, the next spring will see a whole new generation of honeybees.

Ivy bee



These solitary bees live in nests made in the soil of south facing cliffs, and usually feed of the pollen of vine plants, hence the name. Because of this, they can be seen from September to early November when the ivy is in flower.

Did you know?

When the conditions are right, despite the Ivy bee being a solitary species, there can be thousands of nests in one place.

Garden bumblebee



The garden bumblebee is the one of the largest and most common species in the UK. As its name suggests, it can often be found in gardens feeding on foxgloves and honeysuckle.

Did you know?

It has the longest tongue of all the bumblebee species reaching 2cm fully extended, which is the same length as its entire body.



Common carder bee



The common carder bee has a fluffy ginger coat and long tongue like other bumblebees. They're highly social and live in nests of up to 200 workers and a queen. The queen will begin a colony in springtime by laying eggs, which will hatch to become workers that in turn look after the young. The males come out later and mate with new females and hopeful queens.

Top tip

You can encourage carder bees into your garden by planting lavender, clover and heather.

Patchwork leaf-cutter bee



The patchwork leaf-cutter bee is one of a small number of solitary bees that feed on pollen and nectar, but unlike other bees, they like to use leaves to make a nest. They will cut out discs of plant leaves and glue them together with saliva to make a safe and strong structure for their larvae.

Top tip

If you're developing a bee friendly garden, you can drill some holes in dead wood for them to nest inside.



Snail spotting



White-lipped snail



The white-lipped snail can be spotted in several different coloured shells, but you can identify it from the white rim around the shell's opening. They live in a variety of habitats like woodland, grassland and sand dunes. They prefer somewhere damp and like to feast on hogweed and nettles.

Did you know?

White lipped snails are hermaphrodites, which means they are both male and female. Despite this they still need to mate with other snails, and once mated, they bury their eggs in the dirt.

Brown-lipped snail



Similar to its white-lipped cousin, this snail is distinguished by a brown band around the opening of its shell. They also use their shells to defend themselves from predators.

Did you know?

It is vital that snails stay damp. If the snail becomes dry, they will retreat inside their shells to retain moisture.



Get to know a centipede



Brown centipede



The brown centipede has an odd number of legs, 15 pairs each side. With their long antennae at the front and the back, it can be hard to tell which end is which. They rely on these antennae to feel their way around and sense their prey, as they have bad eyesight.

Once they've found a potential meal, they use all their legs to sprint quickly and pounce on their prey. They're a gardener's hidden friend, as they feast on pests at night.

Did you know?

With all their legs, they can actually crawl both forwards and backwards.



Meet the woodlice



Common woodlouse



These hardy minibeasts feed on dead animals and plants, recycling nutrients from the land. They can be seen all throughout the year and have plates on their back for protection against predators.

Did you know?

The common woodlouse may look like an insect but it's actually a crustacean, and therefore more closely related to shrimp and crabs than other land insects. It even has gills like a fish, and uses these to breath through.

Pill woodlouse



The grey rounded body and armour like shell makes the pill woodlouse easy to identify. They are most common at night where they can be seen crawling up the side of trees to feed on mildew and rotting plants.

Did you know?

The scientific name is *Armadillidium*, which means small armadillo. It has this name for its ability to roll into a ball and the segmented armour just like the armadillo.