

DIRT BOX v1.0

User Guide

- OVERVIEW -

The Dirt Box is an ant farm-styled formicary featuring four viewable sides, designed to allow your ant colony to dig its own nest while remaining in full view*.

* **Note:** Ants smaller than recommended for the given Formicary Size may be able to conceal themselves in the dirt until the colony has grown much larger. Always use the correct size to get fullest benefit of the product.

WARNING: CHOKING HAZARD — Small parts. Not for children under 3 yrs. CAUTION: These formicaries are designed for ants 3 mm in length or larger. Some species of ants this length or smaller may be able to flatten their bodies enough to escape outside or into the inner hydration tank.

- GETTING STARTED -

1. Remove the lid and pour the provided dirt into the formicary until the dirt level reaches about 6 mm (¼ inch) above the inner tank. Optionally, use a funnel (not provided) to minimize dust created by pouring.

Eventually, evaporation will cause the uppermost layer of dirt to become visibly lighter in color, indicating it is dry compared to the wet dirt underneath. As this moisture gradient becomes less distinct due to evaporation, small amounts of additional water should be added through the fill hole. Exercise caution, as organic materials in the nest may grow mold more rapidly if excessive moisture levels are maintained.

While the formicary should remain hydrated for about two weeks between waterings, the exact duration may vary depending upon the temperature, humidity, and other environmental conditions. Do not allow the formicary to become completely dry between waterings. Ants will quickly die without access to water or moisture.

- OVERFILLING -

Water moves slowly from the inner container to the surrounding dirt over several hours, allowing ants to safely evacuate their chambers and tunnels should the nest begin to flood from being overfilled. Upon overfilling, the small plug positioned at the bottom may be removed to drain freestanding water. To avoid overfilling, add a small amount of water at one time, and observe the results 6-12 hours later. If additional water is needed, continue adding 5-10 ml each time until the desired moisture level has been obtained.

2. Repeatedly tap the formicary downward on a hard surface to compact the dirt and remove air between the dirt particles. Once complete, the dirt should barely cover the inner tank. As ants dig their nest, they will transport more dirt to the surface.
3. Using the *Initial Fill Guide*, below, evenly squirt the recommended amount of distilled water on top of the dirt according to your formicary's size. Locate the "Tunnel Width" on the back side of the formicary's inner tank, below the fill tubes. Initially soaking the dirt allows the clay content to harden and maintain its structure.

- Initial Fill Guide -

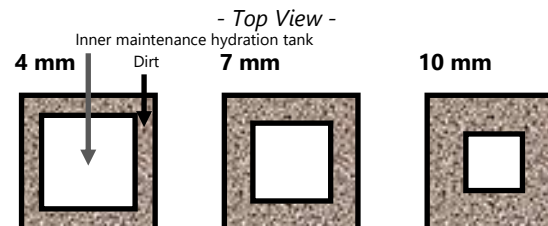
Formicary Size (outside dimensions)	Tunnel Width	Initial Fill Amount
Small (2-5/16" sq. x 5-1/16" h)	4 mm	20 ml
Small (2-5/16" sq. x 5-1/16" h)	7 mm	30 ml
Small (2-5/16" sq. x 5-1/16" h)	10 mm	40 ml
Large (4" sq. x 5-1/16" h)	4 mm	60 ml
Large (4" sq. x 5-1/16" h)	7 mm	80 ml
Large (4" sq. x 5-1/16" h)	10 mm	100 ml

- CLEANING AND REUSE -

Hand wash with warm water only. Avoid soaps and chemicals, which may permeate the materials and potentially make the formicarium uninhabitable. Once free of dirt and dust, wipe the outside with a soft, lint-free cloth to avoid scratching the clear plastic. Never pull the hydration tubes out of the inner container or attempt to disassemble the formicary.

- FORMICARY SIZE VARIATIONS -

"Tunnel Width" is the gap between the inner maintenance hydration tank and the outside wall. It is the amount of space for dirt. The width of the ant tunnels will depend on the size of the ant. Small ants need a small amount of digging space, or they will be concealed from view. Large ants need more digging space, or they will be too cramped.



4. Once the water has permeated the dirt, the nest is ready for use. Moisture levels will continue to stabilize over time, which will cause the nest to dry out more quickly than during regular use. Eventually, a distinctive moisture gradient will be visible, and the user will then maintain the moisture level according to the maintenance section, below.

- MAINTENANCE FOR CONTINUED USE -

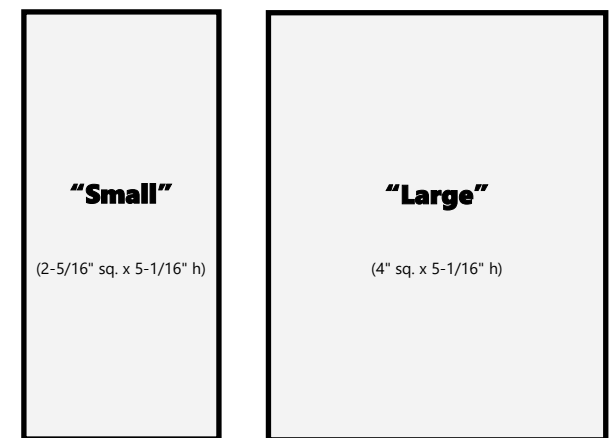
After adding water directly to the top of the dirt (see previous section), moisture levels must be regularly maintained by adding water to the inner tank.

CAUTION: The inner tank contains an absorbent, sponge-like material, and is designed to maintain the moisture level of the surrounding dirt. If this absorbent material becomes oversaturated, water will slowly flood the nest. Take special care not to overfill the inner tank.

First, remove the silicone plug at the top of the lid, above where the two clear tubes are attached. Using a graduated syringe or pipette (not included), inject water into the exposed hole (small size, 5-10 ml; large size, 20-40 ml). It does not matter which tube water flows down. To prevent ants or other insects from crawling inside the hole, always seat the silicone plug back into the lid when not filling with water. (continued) . . .

Additionally, the Dirt Box is available in both a small and large size, which denotes the size of the outside clear container.

- Front View -



For additional help, please visit our antkeeping group:

www.formiculture.com