

Nesting Guide

Keeping ants always starts with the nesting space. Of course an ant can thrive in a multitude of environments. We want to choose the optimal nest for our ant colonies so they will be comfortable.

Test Tubes

Test tubes are the goto founding method for new queens. They are very affordable and offer almost perfect conditions for most ant species. Test tubes come in different sizes and materials. Below are references when choosing a test tube based on species size.

Species size:

- Tiny: 13-15mm x 50-100mm test tube
- Small: 13-15mm x 50-150mm test tube
- Medium: 15-18mm x 100-150mm test tube
- Large: 18-20mm x 100-150mm test tube
- X-Large: 20-25mm x 150mm test tube

Materials:

- Glass: Best visibility, produces a glare, can shatter on impact
- Plastic: Cheaper, will scratch over time, may harbor bacteria



Note: Sizes are metric but may be sold as imperial, so do keep this in mind.

The Test Tube Method

After selecting the right size test tube for your ant colony there are only a couple more things needed to assemble it. We will need clean distilled or filtered water, which you can use bottled or tap water with a dechlorinator. A cotton or sponge plug to keep the water reservoir in the back of the tube. A plug to keep the ants contained inside the test tube. Typically cotton is used, but some tubes come with rubber stoppers or corks. Lastly something long and strong enough to poke the cotton ball or sponge into the test tube. It's also advised to keep tweezers nearby when working with ants.

Assembling the tube is as follows:

1. Hold the test tube in the upright position with the hole facing upwards.
2. Fill the tube between 25-50% full ensuring there is enough space for the ants
3. Use a full or half of a cotton ball depending on the tube and cotton size, then stuff the cotton ball into the tube
4. Hold the tube at about a 45 degree angle.

5. Using the poker, poke the cotton ball down to the water line by pushing gently and consistently to reduce air bubbles.
6. Once the cotton is plugging the water, invert the tube to make sure no water leaks down.
7. Touch up the cotton so no fibers are sticking up and wipe up any water droplets inside the nesting space.
8. Insert your ant queen and workers and plug the tube.

Adding ants to your new test tube setup:

When placing your ants inside the tube it's good to take it slow and work in a space where you can keep a close eye on them. It's recommended you do this on a light colored surface with good lighting. Placing a paper towel down is a good way to not lose sight of them. It's best practice to plug the entrance while adding each queen and worker(if any are present). If dealing with a biting/stinging species with workers present, it might be best to wear latex gloves and add them inside a bin with an escape barrier.

To Be Continued..

HOLISTIC ANTS

