



Dr. Bug's

# Bugbytes

by Robert Cameron

## Baiting for Ants

If ants are plaguing you, an alternative to using an insecticide spray or powder is to use a bait. Baits are available as a plastic or metal 'ant trap' or as a sticky syrup-like substance that comes in a small plastic squeeze bottle. The principle of baiting is for the ants to carry the bait back to the colony and feed it to the larvae, other workers and the queen thereby killing the colony. Baits have to be slow enough acting to allow the workers to carry it back to the nest without being killed themselves first.

Which type of bait to use depends a lot on the type of ant. For smaller ants either the trap or the sticky drops may work. Larger ants such as carpenter ants or field ants will generally ignore the traps but may respond to drops. I use the word "may" as baiting for ants can be very hit or miss. Ant preference for baits varies with type of ant, type of bait and time of year. Some ants prefer sugar baits while others prefer protein baits and often this will change with the season. You may have to try several baits to find one that the ants will accept.

### DOS AND DON'TS

#### DON'T

- spray with insecticide when baiting
- stomp, squash or kill foraging ants
- place baits away from areas of activity

- place baits out once and forget about them
- place sticky drop baits directly on the floor or counter.

#### DO

The most common mistake is to spray an insecticide or use a powder at the same time as using ant baits. Insecticides will both kill and repel the foraging ants preventing them from taking the bait back to the nest. Instead, it is often helpful to encourage ant activity by first putting out an attractant such as honey or maple syrup. Once you have established an area or path of activity then place the baits in these areas. Ants often will not find baits that are away from their paths or foraging area.

Always place baits so that they are out of reach of small children and pets. Sticky drops should be placed on pieces of wax paper, small lids etc., so that they can be replaced or thrown out. The drops tend to go hard after a period of time and can be difficult to remove as well as not being as attractive to the ants. Change the baits regularly and continue baiting until no further activity is noted. In the case of carpenter ants, check on the outside of the house and if activity is observed then bait here as well. It may take several weeks to more than a month to eliminate the colony.



## Givin' you the dirt

by Chris Denich  
The Compass

## Choosing the right contractor

Flip through the yellow pages and you will find a plethora of landscape and general contractors who install hard-landscape features such as retaining walls, interlock paths, drives and patios. With so many names from which to choose, what separates one from the competition? There are several techniques that will keep you from being another, "You think that's bad..." legend.

**Pearl of Wisdom #1:** Always select a contractor you know. This doesn't mean you must be personal friends, but make sure you know of at least one person who has used them and is satisfied with their work. Insight into a company's quality of design, installation, knowledge and service is a must. Word-of-mouth recommendation only comes if contractors are consistently producing quality hard-landscapes.

**Pearl of Wisdom #2:** Don't select your contractor on price alone. If you receive three estimates (always get three) and one is cheaper by leaps and bounds, run away! Some things are too good to be true. Chances are they are skimping on quality or longevity. Do a little research before you get a quote or estimate. Most manufacturers provide detailed literature concerning installation specifications and offer over-the-phone engineering advice. Professionals should know the necessity of a good base and the importance of compaction. However, each hard-landscape has a

different set of concerns, whether structural, functional or aesthetic and should be approached accordingly. When the contractors come, give them your list of what you want them to do - in a nutshell, compare "apples to apples," and make sure each contractor is quoting the same job.

**Pearl of Wisdom #3:** Make sure you like it. Any landscape has a huge degree of permanence and it is paramount that the project be aesthetically pleasing and functional. This doesn't mean discard recommendations; rather, practice moderation.

Once you have chosen your contractor, be truthful. In each step of the process from education, design, engineering, installation, to billing and guarantees, honesty will ease tension. This will lead to a beautiful hard-landscape, of which you can both be proud.

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Neighbour helping Neighbour

Stop break-ins: don't give thieves any breaks!

### Burglar-proof your home with these simple tips:

1. A good lock is a good start. You can purchase a double barrel lock from any good locksmith; once locked, it can't be opened without a key, not even from the inside. This makes it harder to get into your home, or, for that matter, to leave it with your property.
2. A service entrance requires more than the usual door hook. Install a double barrel lock there as well. But be careful: at both the service entrance and main door, always leave the key in the lock while you're in the house.
3. The door to the house from the garage should be as solid as all other exterior entrances and equipped with the same type of safety lock.
4. Change the locks when moving into a new home.
5. The garage door must always be kept closed. In the event of a prolonged absence, padlock the track.
6. Secure your doors. The ideal wooden door has a solid core. Door frames, on each side, should be solid at the level of the locks. If yours is a hollow core wooden door, you should seriously consider replacing it: upgrading such a door requires considerable work and the results are not guaranteed. The best of locks will be useless on a door which can easily be kicked in.
7. An entrance door opening outwards has hinges accessible from the outside. You can prevent their removal by flattening both ends of the hinge pins or by inserting a non-removable screw into the centre of the pin.
8. The optical viewer allows you to see who is knocking at your door. Issue specific instructions that the door is to be opened to no one in your absence. Do not rely on a door chain: once the door is open, the chain can easily be broken with a good push.
9. Glass panes in the door itself, or lateral glass panels popular in some entrances, should either be replaced with an unbreakable material or reinforced with a metal-mesh window guard.
10. The mail slot should not give nimble fingers access to the lock. Watch where you install it. Preferably, seal the mail opening in the door, replacing it with a real mailbox. And never, ever leave an extra key in the mailbox: it's the first place thieves check!

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