

AGES 6 AND UP

1440

1447

# Ant Farm<sup>®</sup>

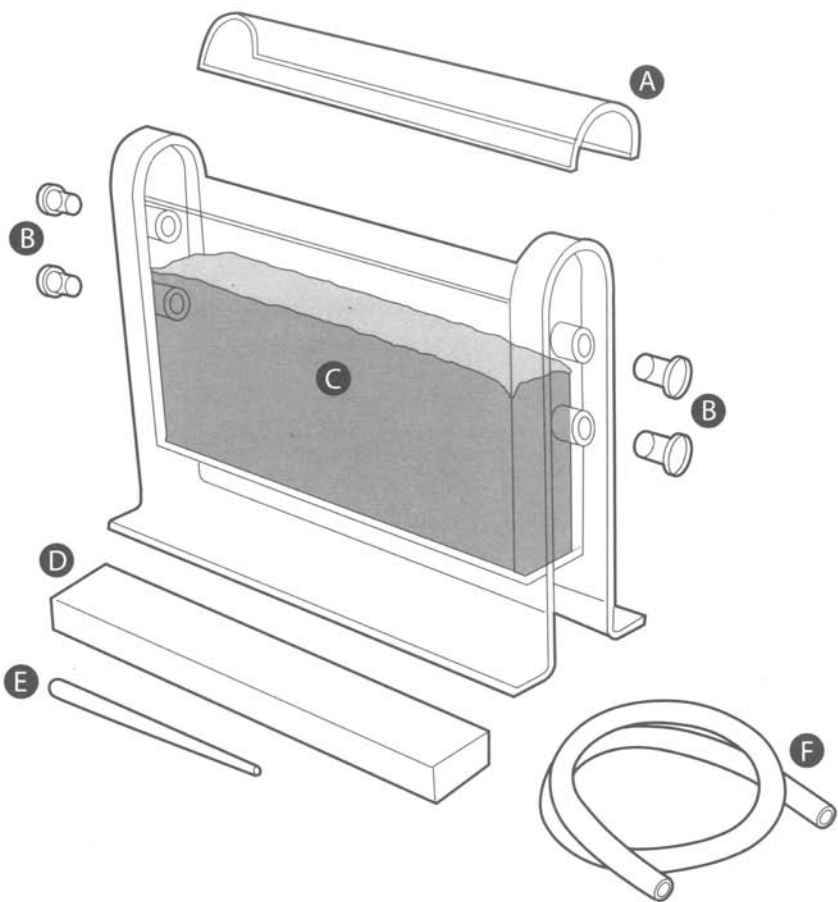
BRAND<sup>®</sup>

## Gel Colony<sup>®</sup>

live ant habitat



**Ant Watcher's Manual**



**A. Habitat lid**

**B. Antport™ plugs (4)**

**C. Gel**

**D. Light module** (included with model 1447)

**E. Tunnel starter tool**

**F. Antway™ connecting tube**

## Enjoy the view!

Ant Farm® brand Gel Colony® is a sleek habitat that offers an excellent above- and below-ground view of ants at work. The gel provides a low-maintenance living environment. And because it is see-through it is easy to watch your ants build their tunnels and chambers.

## It's all in the gel

The unique gel was originally developed by NASA for a space shuttle experiment to see how ants live and work in zero-gravity. It is specially formulated to provide all the necessary nutrients and moisture for your ants. There is no need to add water or food to the habitat.

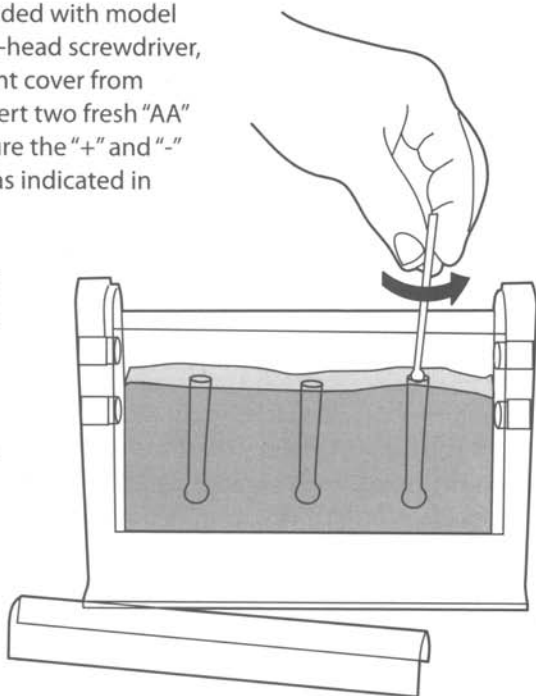
**Please note:** The gel is non-toxic, but is NOT for human consumption.

## Preparing the habitat

1. Remove and discard protective plastic wrap from habitat.
2. Remove the habitat lid.
3. Remove and discard protective plastic liner and absorbent packet from inside habitat. [confirm with Mike about this step]
4. With the tunnel starter tool, make three holes in the gel, each about two inches deep and spaced equally apart. Swirl the tool to enlarge the holes.

5. Optional light module (included with model 1447): Using a small Phillips-head screwdriver, remove battery compartment cover from bottom of light module. Insert two fresh "AA" alkaline batteries, making sure the "+" and "-" ends are inserted correctly, as indicated in battery compartment.

Replace battery compartment cover (do not over-tighten screws). Insert light module into habitat base, making sure it is centered and snug. On/Off switch is located on bottom of light module. (Note: Do not keep light on for long periods of time, as this will quickly drain the batteries. Also, ants need to have some darkness.)

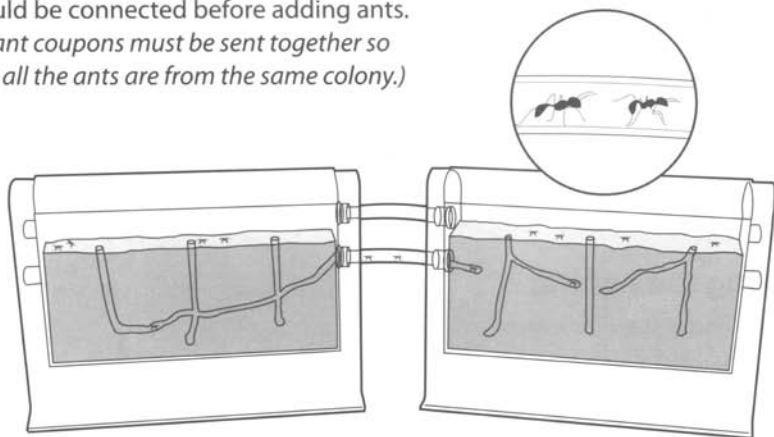


## Getting Connected

Ant Farm brand habitats can be connected to each other. You can connect two or more habitats to build an entire village!

To connect, cut Antway connecting tube to desired length and insert end tightly into an open Antport. Insert other end into an Antport of another Ant Farm brand habitat. Be sure to keep any unused Antports tightly closed with a plug. Habitats should be connected before adding ants.

*(All ant coupons must be sent together so that all the ants are from the same colony.)*



**Connect the Antways**

## Getting Your Ants

You can order ants by mail with the included ant coupon or you can stock your Gel Colony with ants from your own neighborhood.

Your Ant Farm brand habitat comes with an ant coupon. Just fill it out and send it to us in the included envelope along with the postage and handling fee. You will receive by mail a supply of harvester worker ants. (We cannot supply queens or male ants.)

Normally you can expect to receive your ants in three to six weeks, but shipment may be postponed for a while because the weather is either too hot or too cold for ants to safely make their long journey in the mail. Your ants will be sent when the temperature in your area is consistently within a safe range of 34° to 85°F (1° to 29°C). If you have an outdoor mailbox, watch for the mail and do not let the ants stay long in there. It may be too hot or too cold for them! Ask your mail carrier to watch for it and bring it to your front door if that is possible.

You can stock your habitat with ants from your neighborhood, instead. Look for large ants (about 7/8 inch long) that cannot escape through the air holes. Try to find ants that are nesting in the ground; they will be more likely to dig tunnels than ants

that live in trees or elsewhere. Let the ants crawl up onto a stick without touching them. Remove the top frame (Ant Farm and Mini Ant Farm) or top cap (Giant Ant Farm and Antville®) and carefully shake the ants in.

If you order your ants, be sure to read the directions that come with them. Before you open the tube of ants, put it in the refrigerator (not the freezer) for about fifteen minutes. This makes the ants less active and easier to place into the habitat.

When you receive your ants, remember that they have been in their mailing tube for quite a while and are probably very thirsty. It is a good idea to add a few drops of fresh water into the habitat before you put the ants in.

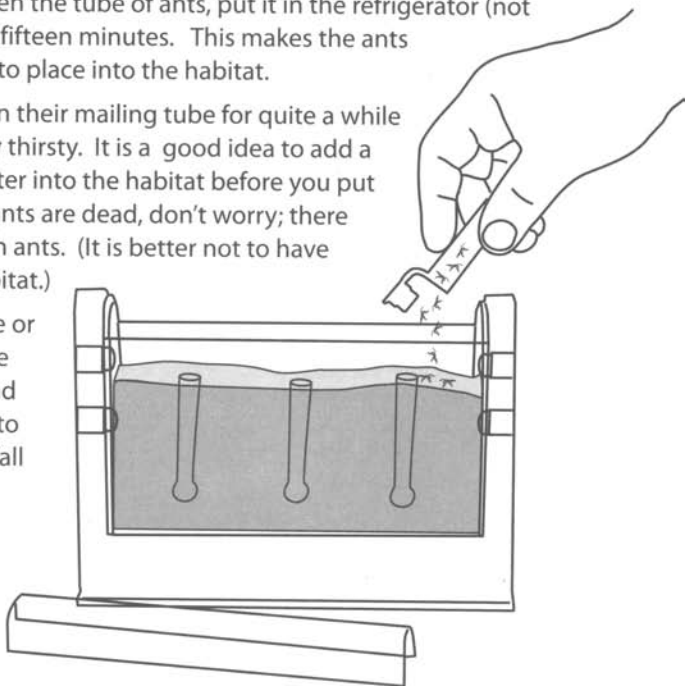
If a few ants are dead when you receive them, don't worry; there are more than enough ants. (It is better not to have an over-crowded habitat.)

Remove the top frame or cap, carefully open the plastic tube of ants and gently shake or tap it to allow the live ants to fall in. Try not to let any dead ants fall in. **BE VERY CAREFUL NOT TO TOUCH THE ANTS!** Replace the top frame or cap.

The ants may seem inactive for the first few hours. That is because they are not yet used to their new home. Put the habitat in a dark, quiet place overnight to let them become accustomed.

## Stocking Your Gel Colony

1. When you receive your ants, be sure to read the directions that come with them. Before you open the tube of ants, put it in the refrigerator (not the freezer) for about fifteen minutes. This makes the ants less active and easier to place into the habitat.
2. Your ants have been in their mailing tube for quite a while and are probably very thirsty. It is a good idea to add a few drops of fresh water into the habitat before you put the ants in. If a few ants are dead, don't worry; there are more than enough ants. (It is better not to have an over-crowded habitat.)
3. Remove the top frame or cap, carefully open the plastic tube of ants and gently shake or tap it to allow the live ants to fall in. Try not to let any dead ants fall in. **BE VERY CAREFUL NOT TO TOUCH THE ANTS!** Replace the top frame or cap.



4. The ants may seem inactive for the first few hours. That is because they are not yet used to their new home. Put the habitat in a dark, quiet place overnight to let them become accustomed. In a few days you should begin see some tunnels. Widen the starter holes a bit if you do not see any tunnels after a week. On average, your ants will live one to six months.

You can stock your habitat with ants from your neighborhood, instead of ordering ants. Look for large ants (about 7/8 inch long) that cannot escape through the air holes. Try to find ants that are nesting in the ground – they will be more likely to dig tunnels than ants that live in trees or elsewhere. Let the ants crawl up onto a stick without touching them. Remove the top frame (Ant Farm and Mini Ant Farm) or top cap (Giant Ant Farm and Antville) and carefully shake the ants in.

**Note:** Never touch ants directly. They can bite or sting to defend themselves. If you're allergic to insect bites, you may get an allergic reaction that could require immediate medical attention.

## Restocking Your Gel Colony

If you want to put new ants in your Gel Colony, be sure to remove any of the original occupants. You should never mix ants from different colonies. There is no need to add new gel. The new ants will explore existing tunnels and build new ones. Please visit [www.unclemilton.com](http://www.unclemilton.com) (click on "customer service") for information on ordering ants and supplies.

## Don't Start a War!

Don't ever mix your ants or you will start a war. While ants in a colony are very cooperative with each other, they will fight with ants from another colony. The ants we send you will all be from the same colony, so they will all get along.

If you gather your own ants, be sure they all come from the same place or they will fight. When you find a big group of ants all living and working together, they are most likely from the same colony.

## Don't Bake Your Ants!

When the sun shines directly on your ant habitat it becomes like an oven, and your ants might die from the heat. Keep the habitat away from any window where the sun shines directly on it.

Don't freeze your ants, either, by leaving the habitat outside in cold weather. Ants don't like extremes in temperature. A room temperature between 68° to 72°F (20° to 22°C) is ideal.

## Ants Don't Like Earthquakes!

Please treat your ants with respect. Place the habitat on a sturdy shelf or table that will not get bumped or shaken. If you shake the habitat, or turn it upside-

down, the tunnels and chambers might collapse. Your ants work hard building their home and if disturbed too much they will stop working and might even die.

## **Ants Are Tidy**

Ants are very clean creatures. You will see them grooming themselves and each other. They use stiff hairs on their forelegs like brushes to clean their antennae, heads and other parts of their bodies. While cleaning themselves and each other, they leave a scent that identifies members of the same colony. Ants can tell the difference between a nestmate and an unwelcome visitor by their scent.

Ants do not allow litter to pile up inside their nest. All the waste from the colony is gathered up regularly and hauled away by nest-keeping ants to a dump site away from the entrance of the nest.

## **Ants Are Industrious**

Each ant in a colony has its own special job, and every job is important. Deep below the surface of a natural nest, nurse ants take care of the queen, eggs and larvae, nest-builders dig tunnels and chambers, and nest-keepers keep the nest clean. On the surface, guard ants patrol for predators and foragers look for food.

In some species, the younger ants work underground and the older ones work on the surface. In other species, different sized ants do different jobs: smaller ants work inside the nest, caring for the queen, eggs and larvae, middle-sized ants do nest-building and most of the foraging for food, and the largest ants are soldiers, protecting the colony from predators and invading ants.

If extra workers are needed for a really big job, ants might switch from one task to another. For instance, if foragers find a good food source, some of the builders underground will stop digging and come up to help. If there is a particularly difficult underground tunneling project to complete, some of the outside foragers will come down to assist.

## **Ants Are Strong and Fast**

Ants are incredibly strong for their size. An ant is able to pick up objects fifty times its own weight and carry it in its mandibles for long distances. That would be like an average-sized human carrying a five-ton boulder across the neighborhood by his teeth! For extra-heavy loads, ants work in teams.

Ants are also very speedy creatures. If you could run as fast as an ant can for its size, you would be able to sprint twice as fast as the world's fastest human!

## **Ants Are Good for the Environment**

Ants perform many important functions in the world's ecosystems. They are exceptional earth movers. Ants enrich, irrigate and aerate more soil more than any other animal in the world, including earthworms. Ants are major recyclers of



**Uncle  
Milton®**

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