



## *Texas Leaf Cutter Ant Solutions*

Texas leaf cutter ants, *Atta texana*, are very destructive – they can defoliate an entire shrub, or more, seemingly overnight! They can be seen in a line, carrying large pieces of a gardener’s prized plant on their backs, heading for their mound, which can be 15 or more feet deep.

They are very interesting native ants. They do not eat the leaves. Instead they grow a fungus on the leaves, and it’s this fungus that they eat. The colony is so extensive and complex that it is a significant challenge to control the whole colony. Therefore, we recommend using creative approaches first, including barriers, before attempting to kill out the whole colony.

For example, one customer derived success feeding her leaf cutter ants so they wouldn’t eat her favorite plants. She periodically fed them alfalfa hay, orange peels, dry Spanish Oak leaves, and corn meal. She also noticed that they ate every variety of lettuce except for Black Seeded Simpson.

Alternatively, a sticky pest trapping substance can be used. Put masking tape in a band around the trunk of trees or shrubs you want to protect, sticky side out, and spread the sticky substance on the tape. This will need to be replenished periodically.

John Dromgoole recommends consistently spraying the ants’ paths with a much diluted **Orange Oil** spray. Since the ants follow their path using pheromones, this spray will disrupt their detection, and they will have to find a new route. In this way, you can divert the colony away from your more prized plants and “herd” them toward a wild edge of your yard.

As a very last resort, you can mix **Dusting Wettable Sulfur** with water and spray it into the colony.

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