

ANTS

Bud Lawry -- 11/7/13

When you were a kid, did you ever lie on your belly in the grass and watch ants work? Maybe you were even lucky enough to have an ant farm. Fascinating little creatures weren't they?

You may have noticed that I used the past tense in the last sentence. That's because I'm no longer a kid and ants have moved from "fascinating" to destructive, pain-in-the-butt nuisances.

Summer in Michigan has become me versus the ants. My wife goes bananas when she sees one in the house. The ones that seem to appear are big black carpenter ants. I've sprayed and powdered outside all around the foundation. I sent away for some special gel that I put in strategic places inside the house. I've sprayed inside the house and placed ant traps. Did you know that if you pour pure ammonia next to your foundation that it will prevent ants from invading your home? I didn't either and it doesn't.

Then there is the lawn, garden, and driveway. I could pursue them into the non-landscaped area of the lot, but that would only increase my frustration. I go to my favorite lawn and garden store and talk to the bug guru and he sells me something different each year. This year he gave, no sold, me a bag of stuff that would take care of everything from grubs that were killing the lawn and feeding the skunks, to the pesky ants. I no longer have grubs nor skunks.

Where do they come from? I kill them in one spot and soon I trip over their hill ten feet away. There are normal ants, then there are tiny ones that make a part of the garden black, then there are the reddish ones that I find periodically that seem to be migrating like the Oakies back during the Great Depression. They are carrying all their possessions and are literally streaming from one part of the yard to another. I'm sure the neighbors think I'm nuts hunched over with my sprayer following this exodus of little migrants.

That's only in Michigan. My first introduction to the Florida variety was when I was waiting for a police car to come to make a report for an accident my Canadian friend had. I was standing on a corner leaning against a light pole while standing on a nest of fire ants. I'm sure all the native Floridians knew exactly why the dude on the corner was doing a pretty good version of the River Dance.

Next were the almost invisible ants that invade the house, which fortunately the exterminator takes good care of. But there are still those in the yard, on the golf course, and they come up in cracks in the pavement.

If you research ants, you'll discover they are described as social insects with many of the same attributes as humans. They practice division of labor, demonstrate problem solving abilities, communicate with each other and have a strong sense of self preservation, to name a few parallels to us mere humans. Maybe *you* could almost admire them.

You may be interested to know that there are 22,000 different varieties of ants. I am convinced that they will be around long after homo sapiens have ceased to exist. And, they are everywhere, well almost everywhere. How's this for irony. The only continent where they are non-existent is ANTartica.