

Ant Discussion Notes

Leaf-cutter ants

39 species

life cycle

have huge nests underground

the queen mates with 5 males and begins to build a nest and spits out a fungus. then lays the eggs

the eggs hatch after 40 days

controls the size of her babies and the sex

3 different castes

- soldier ants- largest (twice as big as the foragers) - protect the nest

- foragers (2-3 times bigger than minimas)- gathers the leaves

- smaller foragers cut the leaves into small pieces at the nest

- minimas- smallest (about 5 mm)- take care of the fungus. the larva eat the fungus.

- take care of the leaf matter.- put enzymes on it to break it down and make more fungus

- soldiers are the fewest, then minimas, foragers are the largest group

the fungus can't live w/o the ants and vice-versa

ants cater to the fungus's needs; right type of leaves, temp., humidity, in the chambers

a colony can hold 5-8 million ants and be as big as a house and weigh 44 tons.

a 15 year old nest is still around

All found in Central and South America, and southern states: Texas, Louisiana

Atta- highest genus- been around the longest- 15 species

Acromyrmex

Sephalagotex

the ants tear up crops

aerate soil

contribute nutrients to earth

food source for animals

queen is huge

everything in the nest is female except when a queen is born, males are born to mate and die