TEXAS MASTER GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
Bastrop County

What's Growing On?

BASTROP COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

March 2026

How to Identify Ant & Termite Swarmers

By Wizzie Brown

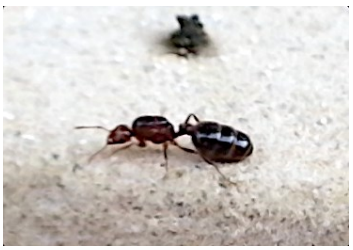
With warm temperatures becoming more regular, swarming insects will soon arrive on the scene. This is a common springtime—and sometimes fall—occurrence where reproductives emerge from their colonies and fly into the air in search of a mate. This most often happens on warm days after a significant rainfall event, but for some species like Formosan termites, they may swarm at night.

"Swarmer" or "alate" are terms used to describe the reproductive stage of ants and termites. Swarmers have wings when they initially leave the colony, but wings are either shed or chewed off once they land on the ground but before they form a new colony. So, how do you tell ant and termite swarmers apart?

There are three morphological characteristics to look for.

1. Antennae.
2. "Waist" – where the thorax and abdomen join.
3. Wings – if the insect still has them.

Ant swarmers have antennae that are bent at a ninety-degree angle and are said to be "elbowed." The "waist" area is constricted, narrowed, or pinched. If you find a reproductive that still has wings—they chew off their wings once they have mated and land on the ground— the front wing will be larger than the hind wing. Ant wings will also have few wing veins. If wings are missing from the ant swarmer, there will not be a wing stub left on the thorax from where the wing was attached. Male ant swarmers retain their wings after landing on the ground, but they die after mating.





Fire ant swarmer (female) without wings, left.
Fire ant swarmer (male) with wings, right.

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Termite swarmers with and without wings.

Termite swarmers have antennae that are straight and a thorax-abdomen area or "waist" that is broadly joined together. Termite reproductive wings are similar in size and shape and tend to have a lot of veins. Sometimes with termites you may find only wings that have been left behind due to shedding when the termites land on the ground, or you may see the termites themselves with or without wings still attached. If you find a termite reproductive without wings, there will be wing stubs, called "scales", left behind on the thorax. Male and female termite reproductives shed their wings after landing on the ground, pair up, and find a site to begin a new colony.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at ebrown@ag.tamu.edu.

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Gregg's Mistflower — One of the Easiest Natives to Grow

By Howard Nemerov



Gregg's Mistflower (*Conoclinium dissectum*) should be emerging by now (left). Soon, it will be flowering, perhaps in time to fuel the spring Monarch migration north. It's a Monarch favorite, and draws many other butterflies as well. Texas tough once established, and easy to propagate from tip cuttings, too.



Volunteering

Master Gardeners volunteer in the community to teach others about horticulture. We follow the research-based recommendations of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Members who complete 50 hours of volunteer service in the year after training earn the designation "Texas Master Gardener." We use our title only when engaged in Texas A&M AgriLife Extension activities.

After the Sale: A Time to Reflect and Look Ahead

By Dale Weiss



Our Spring Plant Sale is now behind us, and once again it reminds me what a dedicated group of Master Gardeners can accomplish when we all pitch in.

From the months of planning and plant ordering, to setting up tables, answering gardening questions, and helping customers carry plants to their cars, this event takes a lot of hands and a lot of heart. Thank you to everyone who volunteered their time and energy to make this year's sale a success.

A special thanks goes to the Plant Sale team and to those who helped introduce our educational programming during the event. Together they helped make this more than just a plant sale — it was an opportunity to share our knowledge with the community.

It's especially rewarding to see longtime members working side-by-side with some of our newer Master Gardeners, sharing knowledge, and building the friendships that keep our organization strong. Events like this also remind us that our greatest strength as Master Gardeners is not just the plants we grow, but the knowledge we share.

What makes this event special isn't just the plants we sell. It's the knowledge our members share with the community and the encouragement we give to new gardeners who are just getting started. That educational mission is at the heart of what we do as Bastrop County Master Gardeners.

Now that the sale is behind us, we turn our attention to the many projects and programs these efforts support throughout the year. I'm looking forward to seeing our members continue to share their knowledge and enthusiasm across Bastrop County.

If you've been thinking about getting involved in one of our projects or programs, this is a great time to jump in.

Thank you again for everything you do for our organization and for our community.

From the President,
Dale Weiss

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