

TETRAMORIUM IMPURUM COLONY 2 JOURNAL

17 May 2007

In a break from my normal tradition of keeping my ants in glass fish tanks, I decided to order a glass "Starter Kit" ant farm from Antstore. The glass ant farm measures 30x20x2 (cm) and has a long plastic tubing which connects to a fish tank style glass box measuring 30x20x20(cm). I ordered it from Antstore at about 5pm yesterday on Tuesday, and it arrived at 2pm the very next day! I have to say that I am very impressed with the starter kit from Antstore. It also came with various sachets of different coloured sand. I have set it all up and as I type this, the water I have poured onto the sand in the ant farm is currently soaking its way through the sand layers.

I also ordered a second colony of *Tetramorium impurum* to go with the ant farm (they arrived in the same box as the ant farm). The delivery guy gave me a weird look as the box was covered in tape that proudly proclaimed "ANTSTORE - THE WORLD OF ANTS" Later on last night it became quite clear that I had put a little too much water onto the sand in the ant farm, so therefore I poured a layer of dry sand on top of the too damp sand and overnight that layer became slightly damp, which meant that it had drawn up some of the excess water from below.

This morning I attached the tube containing the ants to the ant farm by means of the length of clear tubing, and a clever attachment provided with the farm. The colony contains perhaps 50 workers, a queen, and several brood in various stages of development, including 4 or 5 larvae which appear way too big to be worker larvae! ☺ The ants have been exploring their new home but as yet have not started digging in the sand of the main farm area, but then again, from experience, it can take a few days, weeks, or even months of the ants to move out of their glass tube, which they obviously consider home.

22 May 2007

These ants are still currently in the tube they arrived in but a large number of workers have been very busy over the past 24 hours digging tunnels in the sand within the main farm. You can see pictures of this on the *Tetramorium 2 Colony* page. The pile of sand they have dug up is mainly made of white sand, but they have obviously reached the second layer as there are some yellow sand particles in the pile. They have also been eating from a fly I put into the tank with which they have been feeding the queen and larvae.

25 May 2007

The nest construction still continues and now as well as white ants yellow sand particles, the ants are starting to bring up the red sand, which shows that they have reached the third sand layer. The pile of sand has reached the top of the ant farm and so now the ants are placing it into the plastic tubing.

At 8:10 yesterday morning I witnessed the queen ant leave the glass tube and make her way up the plastic tubing and into the main ant farm along with the brood and workers. However, the 5 large queen larvae (as I suspected they are) are still in the plastic tubing as the ants seem to have great difficulty in moving them due to their large size. There were 5 of the large larvae but now I see 4, so one must be inside the main nest. In 36 hours the remaining queen larvae have been moved only a few centimetres. There are always a lot of workers with them but they cannot seem to co-ordinate their efforts and get the large larvae moved.

3 June 2007

These ants have continued to construct their nest, and have now reached the darker red sand, the fourth layer. They have now placed the sand in the tube between the ant farm and the main foraging tank. They have also started to forage and discover the food that I have placed in their tank, which, typical of *Tetramorium impurum*, they have started to bury. When I checked on these ants just before typing this entry, I noticed about half a dozen ants in the tank.

Despite the fact that these ants have been doing a lot of nest construction over the past week or so, I can see no tunnels against the glass—believe it or not, they have dug straight down the centre of the sand! They have been able to do this as they are such a small ants; however, I am hoping that as time goes on the ants will expand the tunnels so they start to show against the glass.

Just in case you're interested I didn't type any of this entry; I have just been trialling Windows Vista's speech recognition software using my microphone. It's pretty good as I have not had to type but just speak the words. I was very surprised to see that it recognized the word *Tetramorium*, but it did not recognise the word *impurum*, however, it recognized it that time because when I first said the word *impurum* in this entry I was able to tell the computer to listen for a new word which I spelt and pronounced, and now the computer recognizes a new word; *impurum*. Good, huh?

17 June, 2007

The sand that these ants have removed whilst digging the nest now reaches 5 inches into the plastic tubing that connects the ant farm to the foraging tank, and is dark red, almost brown in colour—which means that the ants have reached the bottom layer of sand. They forage regularly into the foraging tank and attempt to bury the food I have placed into tank just as when a the *Tetra* species do, however they are not as successful at doing this as the sand is quite dry. I have dampened in the sand in the foraging tank using one of those spray mist

bottles, but this does not seem to have worked very well. In are the ants try to bury it is still looks pretty much in the open and after a while the food starts to smell as it rots. This clearly shows why the Tetra ants bury their food-to keep it fresh, as the buried food in the Tetra 1 colony never spoils.

13 July 2007

Not providing these ants with the opportunity to bury their food as per their species custom seems to have a marked effect on their foraging habits. The thin sand layer in the foraging tank, which was dampened with water a few weeks ago, is now rock solid, and any food I place in the tank seems to go very much untouched and does smell after a while. Therefore, today, I poured in a thin layer of dry peat soil, such as the type I used in my open tanks, including the other Tetra colony, and I have also placed in a fresh piece of cockroach. So far the ants have not ventured into the tank yet but I am hoping that the change of material in the tank will encourage foraging, especially now that they can bury their food. Activity in the nest itself is still very active, though they still have not tunnelled against the side of the glass yet ☹

5 August 2007

It would appear that the nest expansion has ceased now as the sand in the tube has not built up anymore. There are still ants foraging in the tank and eating directly from the food I place in the tank, though they haven't started to bury it yet, despite there being soil present. When they do find food the ants do not come out in great numbers, but then again I am comparing it to a colony much older than this one with hundreds more workers in it (my *Tetramorium impurum* 1 colony). Still can't see into the nest itself.

15 August 2007

Very little to report this update; there has not been much in the way of foraging over the past few weeks. I think this could be due to a slow wind down in brood production as the autumn fast approaches, and then, after that, hibernation.

9 September 2007

Much the same as the previous entry I'm afraid where foraging is concerned. However, I did move the tube that connected the foraging box with the nesting box as I became convinced that the sand in there had collapsed and was blocking the ant's access from the nest to the foraging box. So I shock all the sand out of the tube, noticing no ants or larvae within. The very next day I noticed that the ants had started to rebuild the sand they had in the tube. Obviously they wanted it there in the first place, and probably didn't appreciate my help. Oops!

6 October 2007

I have not seen anything of these ants over the past few weeks, and it appears that they have not been foraging at all, and that their nest building activities have come to a stop. Due to the fact that the outside temperature, particularly at night, has been dropping, it is probable that these ants are preparing for hibernation.

22 October 2007

Hibernating!

15 April 2008

I have not seen much of these ants since the last update, though I do not get to check on the as often as I like. No longer hibernating and now I am seeing several ants sitting in the plastic tubing that connects the foraging tank to the nesting box. There has also been a little feeding from cricket pieces.

28 April 2008

I am starting to see more and more of these ants now, and they have even started to bury their food too, which is an encouraging sign. I often see little groups of workers gathering in the far end of the tubing, near the foraging tank end.

08 May 2008

I feed these ants about a week ago and they seem to have ignored the new food, yet are still busy on the food I put in several weeks ago, which they have buried in good old Tetramorium tradition. I removed the unburied food and replaced it with a fresh piece of cricket. Many workers still gather in the tubing linking the two tanks, at the foraging tank end. I do not know why they do this other than perhaps it is cooler as it is nearer the ventilated part of the set up.

9 August 2008

Due to the lack of time that I have to dedicate to my many ant colonies, I have decided to give several of them away, and this colony is one of them. Therefore this journal is now closed. Sorry for any disappointment to those that may have been following the progress of this colony.

JOURNAL CLOSED