

Termite



GARDEN EARTH
NATURALIST

ECO-SERVICE CARDS

TERMITE

FAMILY: several families

ORDER: Isoptera (means "equal" wings)

IDENTIFICATION CLUES



- ◆ 1/4 - 3/8 inches long
- ◆ pale-colored, soft body
- ◆ sterile workers have short antennae and legs and are wingless (they are similar to ants); wingless, sterile soldiers have large jaws for defending the colony
- ◆ reproductive males and females have 4 wings of equal size



Where to Look:

Termites are found in the ground or in dead wood including buildings and telephone poles or any wood in contact with the ground.

Who Eats It?

Termites are eaten by other insects, especially ants. Birds and bats eat the flying reproductive males and females.



LIFE CYCLE INCOMPLETE METAMORPHOSIS

Termites live in colonies with a queen and king, workers (tend the young and feed the other termites) and soldiers (defend the nest). Queens can lay over 50,000 eggs a day and can live up to 15 years. The young nymphs look like adults without wings.

What It Eats.

The major food of termites is cellulose in dead wood. Microorganisms that live in the gut of the termite help digest the cellulose and turn it into sugars. Termites also eat roots, leaves and fungi.

Role in the Ecosystem

In the forest, termites are very important recyclers of dead wood, but they can cause extensive damage to our homes.



Did You Know

Termites build well-constructed nests in regards to drainage and temperature. These nests also retain a certain amount of moisture as a termite's soft body can dry out quickly.