

Name: _____

Leafcutter Ants

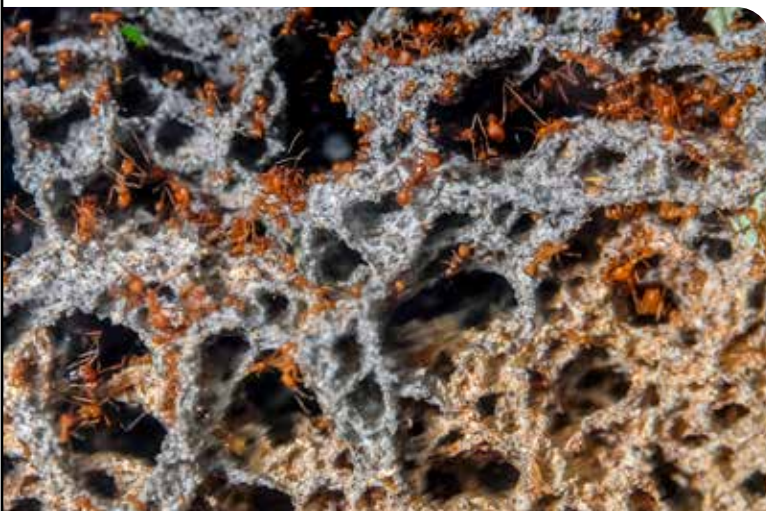
By Mikki Sadil

In the tropical rainforests and subtropical forests of Central and South America lives a species of ants that could be the smallest recyclers on Earth. They are leafcutter ants. These ants travel through the forest looking for leaves, which they cut with their sharp jaws.



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A leafcutter ant fungus garden, made from the pulp of chewed leaves that they collect.

in a highly organized and efficient society with as many as five to ten million ants, and up to seven different categories of work, depending on the size of the individual ant. The queen is the largest, over an inch long, and her only job is to lay eggs. During her lifetime, she could lay as many as 50 million eggs. The male ants are small, have wings, and fly from the colony to mate with a queen, then die soon afterwards. The soldiers protect the colony and defend

the lines of ants who are out collecting leaves. Worker ants belong in several different job categories: some collect the leaves, some tend the eggs, others feed the colony, and some even have adapted elaborate behaviors for taking care of the fungus crop by grooming, cleaning, and pruning it. A specialized group of ants are the trash



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1. What happens to the leaves that are cut and carried away by leafcutter ants?
 - a. The ants place the leaves on the forest floor.
 - b. They grow into new trees.
 - c. The ants place them near fungus on a tree.



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soldiers	
workers	collect leaves
	take care of fungus crops

3. If you wanted to see leafcutter ants in the wild, where might you go?
 - a. Oregon
 - b. Italy
 - c. Panama
 - d. Madagascar
4. What do leafcutter ants eat?
 - a. leaves
 - b. fungus
 - c. seeds
 - d. small plants

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Match each vocabulary word on the left with its definition on the right.



1. _____ pulp

a. cutting off dead parts of a plant



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4. _____ pruning

d. spore-producing organism, such as mold and mushrooms

5. _____ society

e. materials in food needed to keep a person or animal alive and healthy

6. _____ tend

f. material thrown away; garbage

7. _____ nutrients

g. take care of

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c. Panama

d. Madagascar

4. What do leafcutter ants eat?

a. leaves

b. fungus

c. seeds

d. small plants

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6. s. terra

f. material thrown away; garbage

7. e. nutrients

g. take care of