

Wanted: Ant Oil

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Ruslan had not been near the ants himself. That was done by his friend the hunter, although presumably not of ants, who wanted to sell the oil, ant oil, all three liters of it.

Ruslan did not know how the oil was got from the ants but he swore by it anyway.

“It is very good for bruises, cuts and burns,” Ruslan said. “You put it on a burn and it is healed within two or three days.”

He promised to get back later with the price after he was in touch with the hunter.

Luckily another hunter had written of how he had got oil from ants.

When hoping to strike oil among the ant community, choose a foggy day, one so dark that you almost lose your way, he writes. Then find yourself an ant hill and poke your stick in it.

This will infuriate the anthill, which will then ooze its oil out angrily in such a way that it can be collected much later and — for some reason, here they again say a foggy day is good — you

can remove the ooze.

The oil is especially good for rheumatism, they write.

Having seen small kids burn the wings off flying ants in hot English summers without an attack of ooze, there remained a certain degree of suspicion.

But ants do apparently release a certain substance in defense or attack so a surprise stick in your roof would seem a logical way of getting them riled. The substance itself is formic acid, now used in making leather and rubber goods as the world has worked out how to make it artificially. The acid gets its name from the Latin word for ant, formica.

There does, however, seem to be two ways to get ant oil, a simpler if more gruesome way is where you create ant oil by mixing ants and oil. Almond oil is noted in one recipe although any other oil will work too.

For that you mix four parts ant to one part oil and leave it in a warm place for 20 days before putting it through a sieve. The cream left over can be used for rheumatism or for a double dose of ant healing, if you are going to have an ant bath.

An ant bath involves pouring boiling-hot water over an ant hill, best to put it inside a metal container first, and then using the water as an herbal remedy bath.

Somewhat different is ant egg oil, which comes from Turkey and Iran and which, I suspect spuriously, is sold as a hair-reducing cream. Especially after they suggested it could be used on babies so they wouldn't grow hair when older.

The first request on the site is from a man in the UAE who wants to buy it for his wife.

Ruslan did not know how the ants made the oil. He was just selling.

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