

Weaving in My Mango Tree

By Radha H S

When I was growing up in India, there was a mango tree in our yard. I spent many hours under the shade of that tree, looking up for the first signs of fruit. Mangoes are sweet and juicy. As soon as I saw a ripe one, I wanted to eat it.

One day, I was searching the tree for mangoes when I saw something else. It was big and fuzzy and covered with leaves. Ants were crawling in and



Weaver ants save mango trees.

out of it. What was in my mango tree? I ran inside and asked my aunt.

My aunt told me the big fuzzy thing was a cocoon, home to the kenjga, also known as weaver ants. While many

insects use silk to spin cocoons for themselves, weaver ants build a home for the whole community.

Ants That Eat Flies

Weaver ants are big orange-red insects. If you bother these ants, they may bite you. But if you leave them alone, they could save your mango trees. Weaver ants eat fruit flies and other insects that harm fruit trees.

My aunt told me to leave the weaver ants in the mango tree. Soon, they were living in other trees. Weaver ants can walk on pipes and tree branches to get to new trees. They can even walk on clotheslines. They sewed cocoons in our coconut trees. They made homes in our bitter-lime and lemon trees, too.



Weaver ants eat wasps and other insects that come near their cocoon.

The weaver ants live in my mango tree to this day. And delicious mangoes still grow. We eat the ones the monkeys leave behind for us! 🍌

Family Business

Weaver ants are hard workers. They use teamwork to make their nests. They pull together leaves. Once they have lined up the leaf edges, each adult ant holds a baby (larva) while it releases silk. The larva releases a sticky silk and glues the leaves together. This weaving of silk and leaves is how the weaver ants got their name.

