HEX.PLAN.X

The Hex Planet Experiment

User Guide

V1.11

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Background

A research outpost has been experimenting with automation but something went wrong. Now machines and organic material are corrupted. Most inhabitants cower in underground shelters and need urgent medical attention. Some have vehicles and try to help, go about their normal business, or take advantage of the situation for their own benefit. Military and emergency vehicles do their best to regain control but are outnumbered. You are sent to tip the balance, restore order and rescue the injured.

The Mission

The object of the game is to find and destroy all the mechanical ants in a research facility on a far off planet. Once this is done you need to return to the centre of the facility to complete the level.

You are also tasked with rescuing as many humans as possible. If they see you or if you call them they will follow you. As long as they are inside the blue safety zone circle around you they will be safe. If they stray outside they can be attacked by any orange and red infected entities and mutate.

There are goods and tokens that can be picked up if they are within reach. Orange goods can be sold at deposit points and if you sell enough you might get an upgrade. Red goods are contraband – they are valuable, but can only be deposited in secret criminal areas and holding them is illegal.

The Player

Your character is at the centre of the screen. You have a blue exosuit that requires energy to operate and to sustain you. If you run out or energy you die. When you move, fire or when your shield is attacked energy is used. The shield, or safety zone, is shown as a blue circle around you. Managing your energy is a crucial part of the game.

You can only move between way-points – these are blue blobs on the ground. You can only move to way-points within a limited range. Route lines help identify what paths you can take. You cannot move to a way-point that will put you in immediate danger.

The Facility

The facility has six main areas. The areas are joined by pathways and each pathway has a service area where you can recharge, deposit goods and get medical help for humans.

Other vehicles are present in the facility. Ambulances may pick up stray humans. Police patrol some areas and will become aggressive if provoked or if you choose to carry contraband goods. Military vehicles help to attack enemy creatures but don't get in their way or pick a fight with them unless you want trouble. Some civilian vehicles are present and they may also attract human followers or pick up goods, some are aggressive and greedy and some are more passive. Deliberately damaging another vehicle may get you into trouble with the police! If you put your sight on a vehicle it will give you status information.

Gameplay

You start in the central service area. You need to return here if you complete your mission. There is a recharge point and a medical rescue point which is typical of service areas. You can move by choosing your route via way-points.
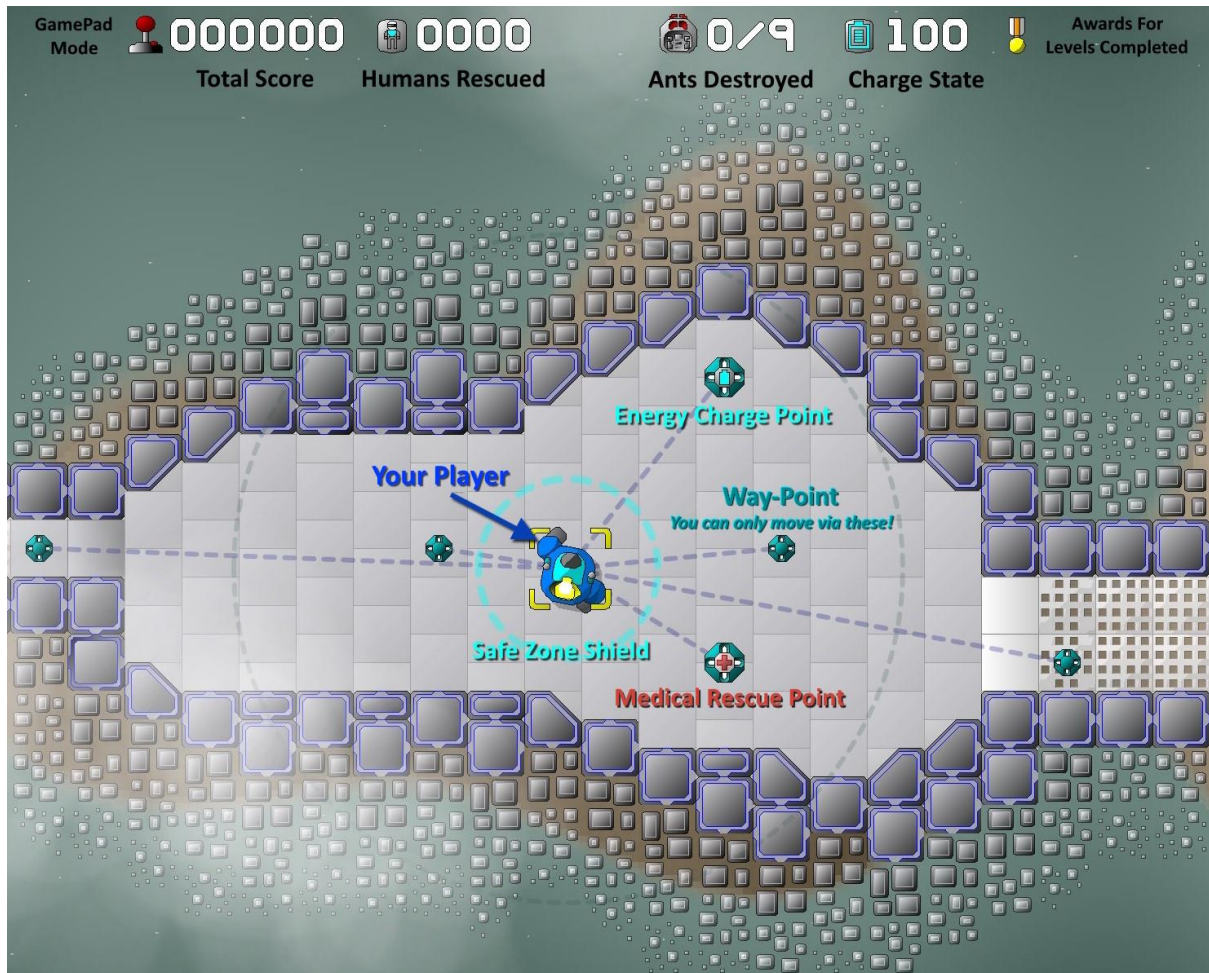
You can use a standard (x-box style) twin-stick gamepad or a mouse to control your player.

If you have a gamepad connected this will be used by default, otherwise the mouse will be used. You can use the General Settings menu to change your preferred controller and you can see what's chosen by the icon to the left of the score at the top of the screen.

With a **mouse** you just **point and click** on way-points to move, or other objects to interact with them - for example: shoot enemies, pickup objects, call humans.

With a **gamepad** you **move with the left stick** – it'll find the closest valid way point in the direction you point. For other interactions you get a **target sight that you control with the right stick** – it automatically gravitates to objects of interest – **interact with objects using either trigger**. You can **return the target close to you using either shoulder button** – take note because this is very useful!

When you first play the game it will show you hints on what to do and how to do it – you can switch these hints off in the General Settings menu.

Gamepad Control Summary
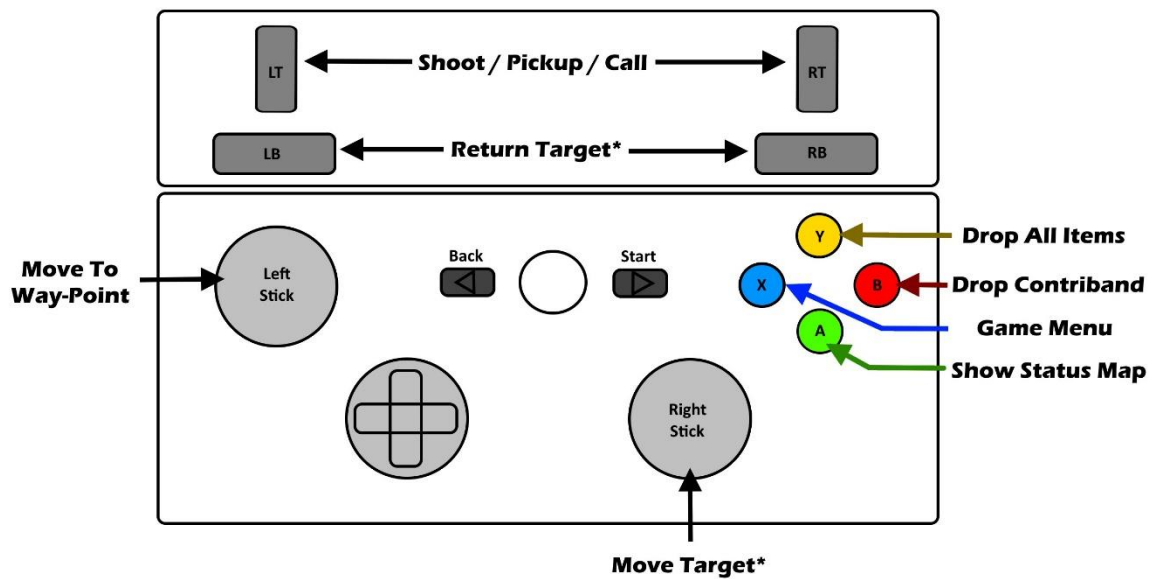
Pushing the left stick in will use **turbo-walk** mode when moving – this uses much more energy and is only allowed if you have reasonable energy reserves.

Holding both triggers together will fire your **smart laser**, destroying any smaller infected entities in view. This will use a lot of your energy and cannot be used too frequently.

(X) can be used in-play to pause the game as well as showing various menu options.
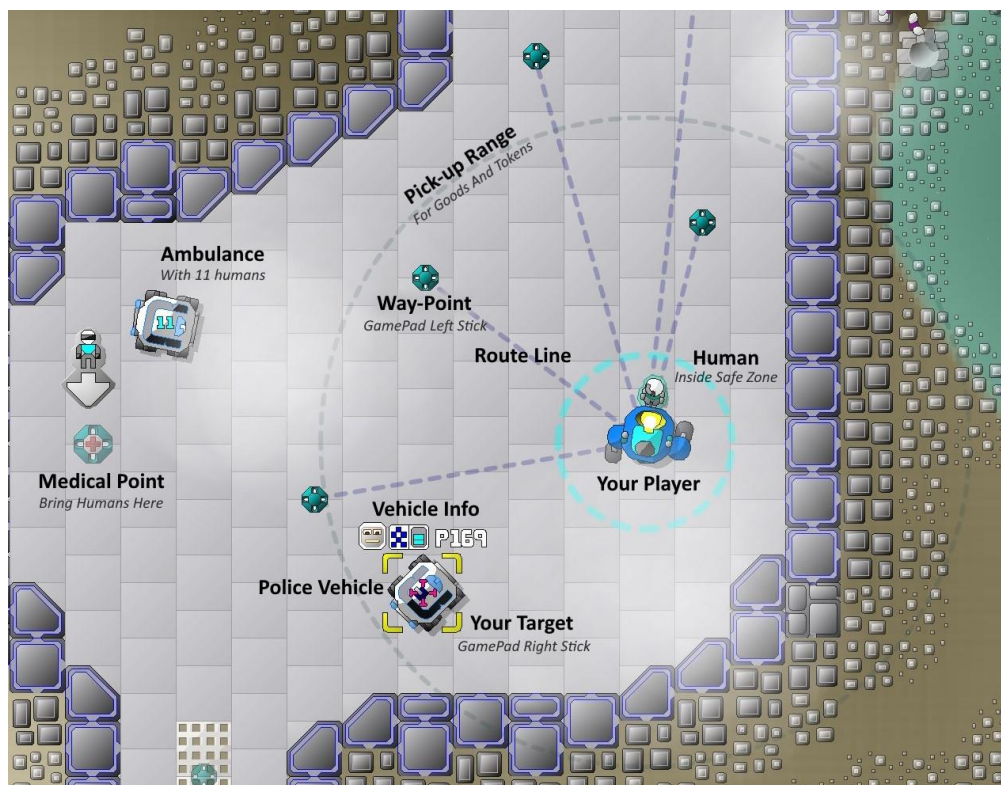
Saving the Facility

The ants are the generals coordinating the attack on the facility. Your mission is to destroy them, but to do that you have to **destroy the head <u>and</u> the body**.
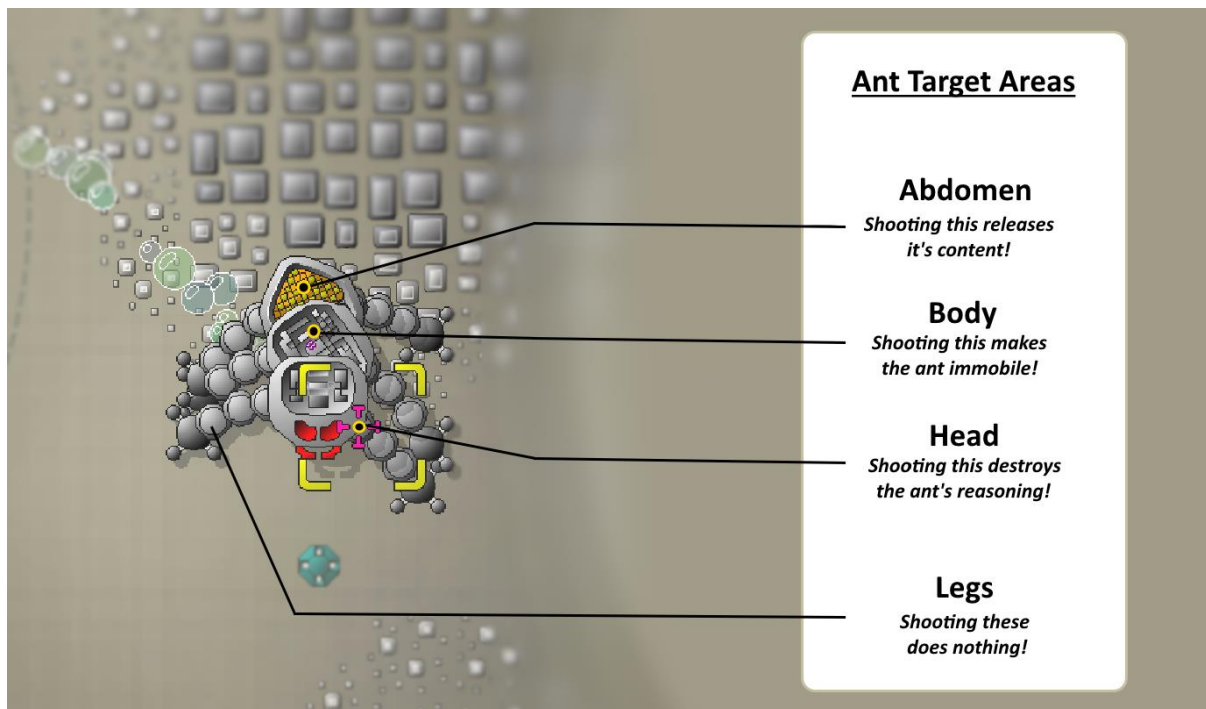
Shooting the legs has no effect and just wastes your energy. If you shoot the abdomen, or when the ant dies, it will release its contents - captured humans or other small creatures. Will you be able to save them or will they be infected and attack you? Also goods and contraband may be dropped.

Top tip: if you're using a gamepad but don't want to carry contraband, you can pick up everything then press (B) to drop just contraband items.

Pressing (A) on the gamepad, or right clicking on the player if you're using a mouse, reveals a status map showing which areas are still inhabited by ants and your weapon status.
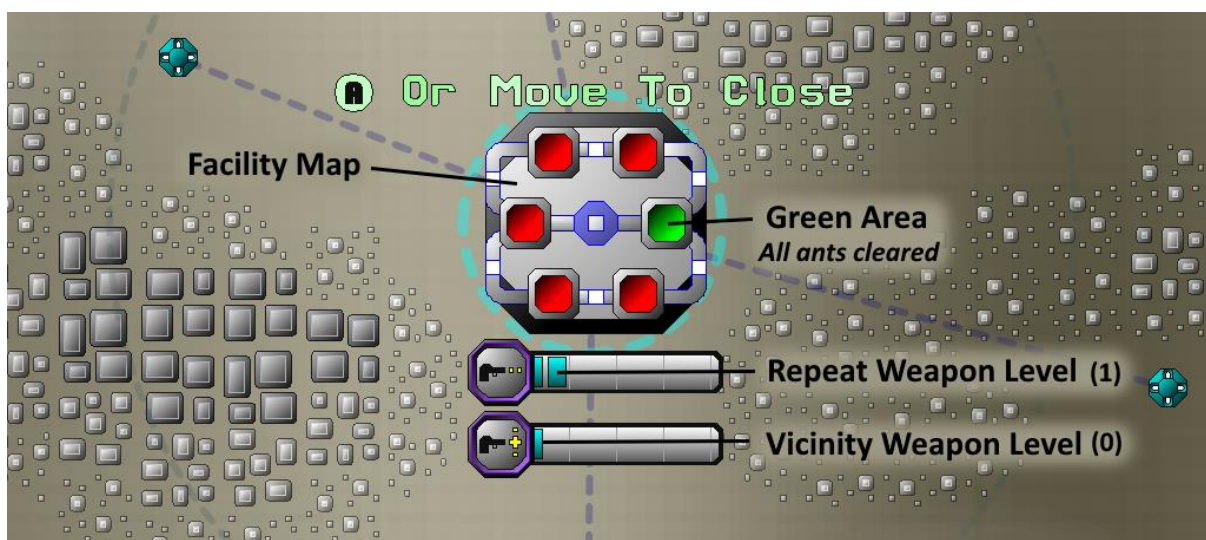
When you are attacked by the various enemies of the facility your shields will protect you but energy is used and sparks will fly!

As long as humans stay within the safety zone of the shield they will be safe.

Enemies include infected humans and birds; any criminal humans – but only if you upset them or walk into them; mechanized flying ducks and, of course, the mechanical ants that coordinate the attack on the facility.

There are also toxic gas bubbles emitted from a number of sources. They are not individually very dangerous but beware large groups of bubbles and avoid too much low level exposure as it'll wear down your shields.
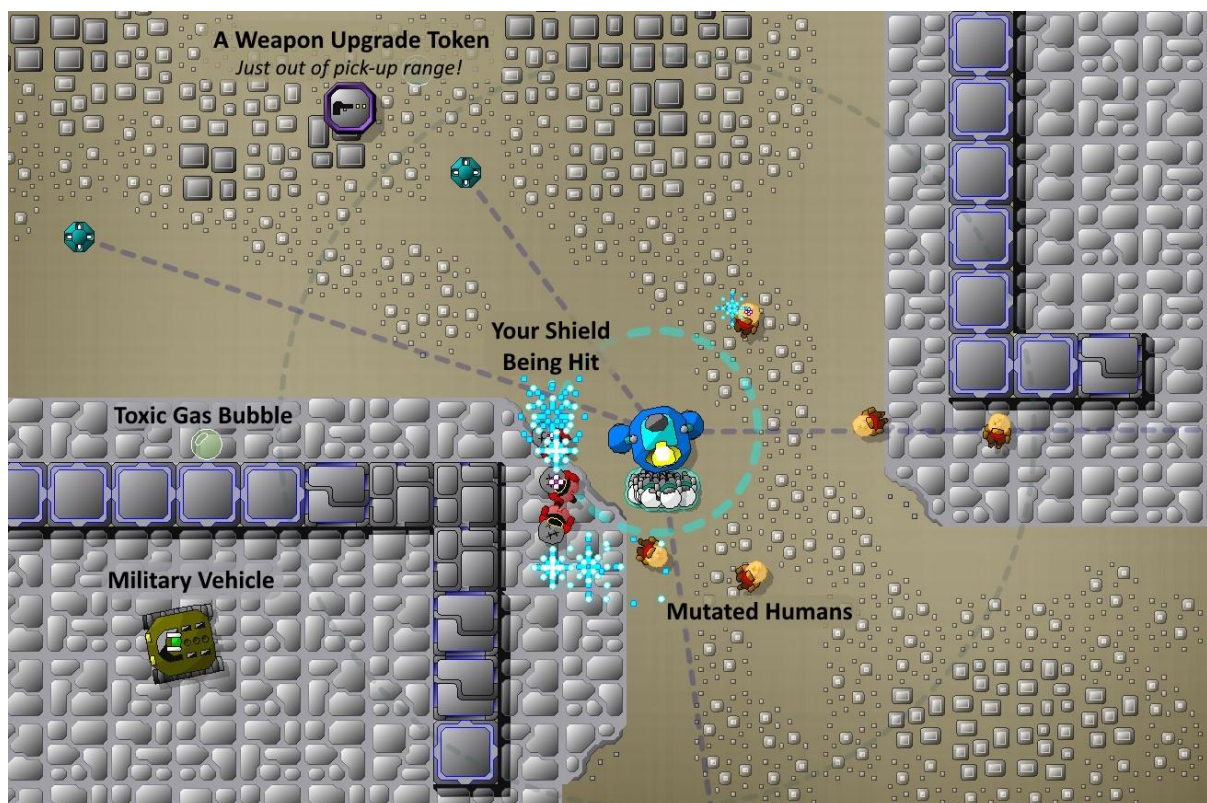
You should keep a careful eye on your energy level as you might have a long walk for your next recharge – you want to be sure you can make it!

Weapons

You can upgrade your weapon in two ways: by picking up tokens or by trading enough goods.

'Repeat fire' upgrade allows you to hold the trigger and the weapon automatically fires repeatedly. The more repeat fire upgrades you get, the faster the repeat – the repeat frequency increases.

'Vicinity weapon' upgrade causes enemies near a kill to also be killed. The more vicinity upgrades you get, the further away from each other those enemies can be – the vicinity range increases.

Menus

Main Menu

- Start Game
- Settings
  - General Settings
    - Controller
      - Mouse / Gamepad
    - Sounds
      - Vol 0 / Vol 1 / Vol 2
    - Show Hints
      - On / Off
  - Display Settings
    - Detail
      - Full / Part / Min
    - Resolution
      - Auto / 1080 / 1440
    - Frame
      - Full Screen / Window
  - Start Level
    - 1-20 *(You can set this once you have reached a level)*
- Instructions
- Quit (Program)

In-play Menu – Press (X) on gamepad, [Esc] on keyboard

- Return To Game
- Settings
  - General Settings
    - Controller
      - Mouse / Gamepad
    - Sounds
      - Vol 0 / Vol 1 / Vol 2
    - Show Hints
      - On / Off
  - Display Settings
    - Detail
      - Full / Part / Min
    - Resolution
      - Auto / 1080 / 1440
    - Frame
      - Full Screen / Window
  - Start Level
- Instructions
- Quit (Game)

TroubleShooting and FAQs

The game splash screen shows but then the program shuts down

Do you see a system check error before it shuts down? The program checks for a minimum system spec – 6 cores, 2 GHZ base processor speed and 3Gb of free RAM.

If there is not enough RAM try shutting down other apps that are running.

If you think the program is stopping but your hardware should be ok then you can add '-nsc' flag to bypass the system check – right click on the app shortcut, go to the Target field and add ' -nsc' at the end after .exe eg 'SomeFolder/HPX.exe -nsc'. Then try restarting.

The player won't move

It may sound obvious but is the correct controller chosen and plugged in? Check the controller icon at the top left of the screen – go to General Settings menu to select a controller. If you attached a controller after starting the program try restarting.

Check the program isn't paused. Try pressing (A) button on gamepad or [Space] on keyboard – make sure the program has focus.

The player doesn't move as expected.

You can only move to a way-point, you don't have complete freedom of movement.

You can only move to way-points in range (as indicated by route lines). Out of reach way-points will be faded or not visible and will not have route lines to them.

If you can't see route lines at all, check the detail level isn't 'Min' in display settings.

You cannot move to a way-point that puts you in immediate danger – you'll hear a 'Path Blocked' message because there is something that will damage you on the way point you are aiming for.

Sometimes I can't shoot things

If you're using a gamepad have you targeted a shootable object with the yellow sight?

If you're using a mouse or a gamepad, and you are locked onto an object that you can interact with, a small purple + target is shown on the object.

You can't shoot humans, goods, tokens, abandoned experiments or static objects like rocks.

If you are on a charge point you're not allowed to shoot – weapons are disabled on charge points.

The player doesn't fully recharge

It takes a second or two for your player to fully charge on a charge point. Try waiting just a little bit longer.

I only see 4 ants to destroy. I can't get into some areas in the North or South West.

The demo version has just 4 ants and only 3/6 areas are accessible.

I can't pick stuff up

Is the object an energy token, a weapon token or goods? If not then you can't pick it up.

Is the object within pick-up range? If you're not showing the range indicator this might not be obvious.

Are you running a Demo Build? It'll be shown in fairly obvious red text on the main screen. If you are then there are no objects you can pick-up and no range indicator is shown.

I can't change the level that the game starts at.

Have you reached the level you want to start at? You can only select a level if you have previously reached that level.

Are you running a Demo Build? It'll be shown in fairly obvious red text on the main screen. If you are then this option is not available.

The file saved with settings and level information is invalid or has been copied from another machine.

I changed the game display resolution or windows setting but nothing happened

These changes only take effect if you shut down and restart the program.

My normal Windows display resolution is changed after running

In full screen mode the program sets the optimum screen resolution for the game and on shut-down resets the resolution to what it was. If the game shuts down unexpectedly the reset might not happen so you'll have to set this manually from Windows Display Settings.

Anti Virus Is warning that the program is not safe

Because there are relatively few instances of this program in circulation Anti Virus software can get spooked when it changes display resolution or writes game settings to a local file. It's best if it's installed somewhere under C:\Users or in the default Steam application folder, and/or you tell your AV software that HPX.exe is ok.

I use a 4K screen and the display isn't as crisp as I'd like

Try using 1440 Windows mode in Display Settings. This won't rescale from 1440 to your 2160 screen resolution so it will be pixel perfect, but in a window.

Demo Mode Restrictions

The demo build has some restrictions over the full game
- The map is restricted to the West, East and South-East areas.
- There are only 4 ants to kill.
- There are no goods or upgrade tokens to pick up – the pick-up range indicator is not shown.
- Only level one is available – once completed the game ends. There is no option to start at a higher level.

Frame Rate is Low or Graphics Occasionally Seem to Slow Down

On the main menu screen there should be a number displayed at the bottom left – this should ideally be 60 (sometimes 59). That's 60 frames per second. If it's much lower then there could be a number of reasons…

Does your hardware meet the minimum recommended requirements?
- Windows 10 with 8GB total RAM or Windows 11 with 16GB RAM.
- Intel i5 (10 Gen+) or i7; AMD Ryzen 5 or 7 processor.
  6+ cores and a base speed of at least 2Ghz with a max speed of > 3GHz.
- AMD or NVidia graphics card – other cards will work but may be much slower.
- 3Gb of free RAM.

You can check most of this on Windows Task Manager – see screenshot below.

If you're using a laptop then the power settings may reduce the maximum speed the processor can run at when on battery power. You might find plugging it in increases the performance and/or you can adjust your Windows power settings for higher performance on battery power (this will affect your battery life).

Do you have other apps running and using a lot of memory or processor resources? Check on Windows Task Manager performance page and/or reboot your PC.

Sometimes if you've just started Windows other processes can be doing housekeeping tasks that can be processor intensive – check on task manager performance tab and wait for these to finish.
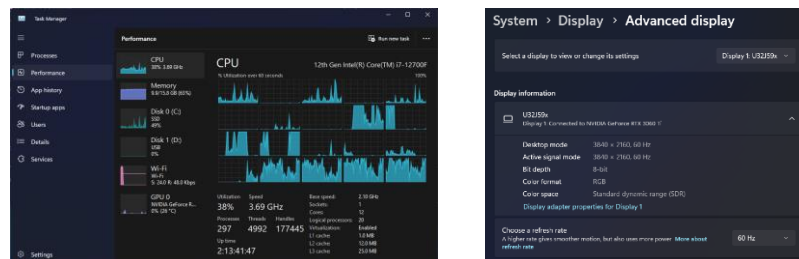
Check your monitor can run at 60Hz at 1080 or 1440 resolution. See Windows Display Settings -> Advanced display (under Related Settings). See screenshot above.

If the main menu shows 60fps, but you still see performance drops during play then…

Simply restarting the program or even re-booting your PC might help.
Try reducing the graphic detail in the Display Settings menu.
Try running at 1080 resolution - see the Display Settings menu.

The game can run at lower resolutions and at frame rates lower than 60fps if your graphics card or monitor are limited. It will run at 30fps for example, and make adjustments for the lower frame rate, but the experience will not be as smooth or crisp as it could be.