

## Pest Profile



**Photo credit:** April Nobile, California Academy of Sciences  
(Specimen CAsENT0005064; from <https://www.antweb.org>)

**Common Name:** Little fire ant (electric ant)

**Scientific Name:** *Wasmannia auropunctata*

**Order and Family:** Order Hymenoptera; Family Formicidae

**Size and Appearance:**

	Length (mm)	Appearance
<b>Egg</b>		
<b>Larva/Nymph</b>		
<b>Adult</b>	Workers range from 1.2 – 1.5 mm  Queens are 4.5 – 5 mm	Workers are light brown in color. They have a two-part waist, dorsal spines, a stinger, and 11 segmented antennae that end in a two-part club (enlarged segments).  Colonies have multiple queens (polygynous).
<b>Pupa (if applicable)</b>		

**Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.):** Chewing

**Host(s):** The little fire ant is omnivorous but does tend hemipterans that feed on plant juices, exposing plants to additional pathogens.

**Description of Damage (larvae and adults):**

The little fire ant is an invasive ant introduced from South America. This ant is a pest of disturbed forests and agricultural areas, especially if there is a monoculture, such as of cocoa or sugar cane. These ants pose a significant threat to wildlife and disrupt ecosystems by displacing native ants and decreasing invertebrate and vertebrate numbers and biodiversity through predation.

This species is omnivorous, eating dead and living invertebrates, fruits, seeds, honeydew from hemipteran plant pests, small vertebrates, and a variety of human foods. They will nest anywhere including in buildings where they contaminate food, bedding, and clothing.

The little fire ant gives painful stings which is especially an issue for people working in agricultural areas where this species is dense. They may sting and blind pet cats and dogs.

The little fire ant is currently found in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Hawaii, and Illinois. The ants have been reported from California but does not appear to have established there.

**References:**

Klotz, J., Hansen, L., Pospichil, R., & Rust, M. (2008). *Urban ants of North America and Europe: identification, biology, and management*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

*Wasmannia auropunctata*. (2019). Retrieved from  
[https://www.antwiki.org/wiki/Wasmannia\\_auropunctata](https://www.antwiki.org/wiki/Wasmannia_auropunctata)

Wetterer, J.K. (2009). *Wasmannia auropunctata*. Global Invasive Species Database. Retrieved from  
<http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/species.php?sc=58>