

Pest Profile



Photo credit: April Nobile, California Academy of Sciences
(Specimen CASENT0006406; from <https://www.antweb.org>)

Common Name: Texas leaf cutter ant (leaf cutter ant)

Scientific Name: *Atta texana*

Order and Family: Order Hymenoptera; Family Formicidae

Size and Appearance:

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg		
Larva/Nymph		
Adult	Workers range from 1.5 – 12 mm Queens are 17 -18 mm Males are 13 – 14 mm	Workers are highly polymorphic .The larger ants are sometimes called soldiers or majors (10 – 12 mm) and the smallest workers are referred to as minims. Workers are a dark brown with 11-segmented antennae, a two-part waist, three pairs of dorsal spines, an additional pair of spines on the back of the head, and a stinger. Queens resemble workers but are much larger with a noticeably larger thorax and wings. Colonies have multiple queens (polygynous).
Pupa (if applicable)		

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

Host(s): The Texas leaf cutter ants harvest leaves and flowers upon which they grow a fungus that they eat. The leaves may come from crops, grasses, trees, and shrubs.

Description of Damage (larvae and adults):

The Texas leaf cutter ant is a significant pest of plants in natural, horticultural, and agricultural areas. These ants collect leaves from pine trees, fruit trees, vegetables, ornamental shrubs, roses, and many other plants, as well as seeds. These ants cut portions out of the leaves or needles and may completely denude plants, including trees. They also do serious damage destroying pine seedlings, so they are a significant pest on pine plantations.

These leaf cutter ants sometimes enters buildings where they forage on cereals and other household foods.

The Texas leaf cutter ant is found in Texas and Louisiana in the USA.

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.
- Kulhavy, D., Smith, L.A., & Ross, W.G. (2001). Impact of the Texas leaf cutting ant (*Atta texana* (Buckley))(Hymenoptera, Formicidae) on a forested landscape. *Faculty Publications. Paper 416*.
- Texas Leaf Cutter Ant, *Atta texana*. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://urbanentomology.tamu.edu/urban-pests/ants/leaf_cutting/