Pest Profile

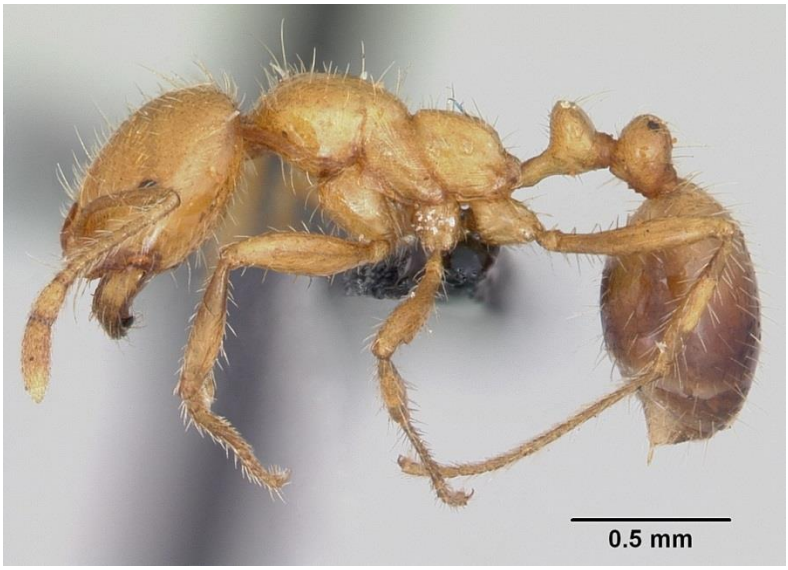

Photo credit: April Nobile, California Academy of Sciences
(Specimen CASET0063126; from www.antweb.org)

Common Name: Tropical Fire Ant (TFA; also called the ginger ant)

Scientific Name: *Solenopsis geminata*

Order and Family: Order Hymenoptera; Family Formicidae

Size and Appearance:

	Length (mm)	**Appearance**
Egg		
Larva/Nymph	Vary from 0.63mm (newly hatched) to 5.2 mm (major workers)	
Adult	Workers range from 3 – 8 mm	All fire ants are characterized by several body features, including a relatively boxy-shaped head; 10-segmented antennae with the last segments enlarged as a club; the lack of spines on the back; a two-part waist; a prominent stinger; and the cuticle is typically free of texture or sculpture.

		TFA workers have a bi-lobed head and are orange to brownish in color. Colonies may have one queen or many (up to 90; in Florida and Texas)
Pupa (if applicable)		

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

Host(s): Generally, *Solenopsis* fire ants are omnivorous and generalist predators, eating a variety of animals and plants.

Description of Damage (larvae and adults):
TFA forages on a variety of plant parts, including seeds, thus, killing the plants and eating seeds. They eat shoots, buds, roots, and bark (girdling the trunks). They are known pests of tomato, corn, sorghum, cabbage, squash, tobacco, strawberries, coffee, avocado, cocoa, citrus, sugarcane, eggplant, cotton, potato, papaya, okra, banana, mango, hollyhock, crotons, ailanthus, hyacinth bean, cucumber, Indian chickpea, pigeon pea, pineapple, and many more. Further, TFA often tend and protect a variety of aphids, mealybugs, and scale insects, which feed on plants and have impacts on agricultural plants.

TFA is also a concern for animals. TFA attacks eggs and hatchlings of birds and reptiles, cattle, camels, poultry, and other livestock.

TFA may also be a pest of human buildings, including homes. They also attack various materials, including rubber, plaster, fabric, plastic, shellac, and the PVC coating on electrical wires.

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.

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Taber, S.W. (2000.) *Fire ants*. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press.