

Pest Profile



Photo credit: April Nobile, California Academy of Sciences
(Specimen CASENT0005710; from <https://www.antweb.org>)

Common Name: California harvester ant

Scientific Name: *Pogonomyrmex californicus*

Order and Family: Order Hymenoptera; Family Formicidae

Size and Appearance:

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg		
Larva/Nymph		
Adult	Workers range from 5.5 – 8.7 mm	<p><i>Pogonomyrmex</i> harvester ants are characterized by broad, boxy heads, 12-segmented antennae, a two-part waist, and a stinger. Many species have a set of long hairs (psammophore) on the posterior lower portion of the head, behind the mouthparts.</p> <p>For the California harvester ant, the worker color varies from a light to dark red, sometimes with the gaster (last few segments of the abdomen) a darker red, brown, or black and that may have black blotches. Fine lines of texture are found on the head and thorax (rugae)</p> <p>Colonies have one queen (monogynous).</p>

		Queens are similar to workers but larger with a larger thorax. Female and male reproductive ants have wings.
Pupa (if applicable)		

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

Host(s): Harvester ants in the genus *Pogonomyrmex* specialize in seeds but may forage on other foods (generalist and opportunistic).

Description of Damage (larvae and adults):

The California harvester ant is primarily a pest of lawns.

They have a potent sting that produces persistent pain with the most toxic of insect venoms. The effects of the venom may spread through the lymphatic system. Further, their stinger is barbed and detaches into the wound. The venom may cause severe allergic reactions, other serious problems, and death of livestock, pets, and people. These ants sting in defense of the nest, so avoiding the nest area is a good idea.

The California harvester ant is native to North America and Mexico. The ant is common in the southwestern USA, including Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah.

References:

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Schmidt, J.O. (2003). Venoms. In R.H. Resh & R. T. Carde. (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of insects* (1160 – 1163). Amsterdam: Academic Press.

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