

Pest Profile



Photo credit: April Nobile, California Academy of Sciences (Speciment CASENT0103056; from <https://www.antweb.org>)

Common Name: Florida harvester ant (Southern harvester ant)

Scientific Name: *Pogonomyrmex badius*

Order and Family: Order Hymenoptera; Family Formicidae

Size and Appearance:

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg		
Larva/Nymph		
Adult	Workers range from 6.3 mm – 9.5 mm	<p><i>Pogonomyrmex</i> harvester ants are characterized by broad, boxy heads, 12-segmented antennae, a two-part waist, a pair of dorsal spines and a stinger. Many species have a set of long hairs (called a psammophore) on the posterior lower portion of the head, behind the mouthparts.</p> <p>This species also has texture of lines on the head and thorax (rugae) and is dark rusty red in color.</p> <p>The workers are polymorphic with the majors having large heads. The minors are smaller. There are a variety of sizes between these two.</p>

		<p>Colonies have one queen (monogynous).</p> <p>Queens are similar to workers but larger with a larger thorax.</p> <p>Female and male reproductive ants have wings.</p>
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):

Despite harvesting seeds, these ants are not of particular concern in agriculture and horticulture, though they are considered lawn pests. However, they have a potent sting with a toxic insect venom that causes the most persistent pain of any ant venom. The venom effects may spread through the lymphatic system and become quite serious. The sting may produce severe allergic reactions 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 Florida harvester ant is especially abundant in Florida but is also found in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. There are unverified reports from New Mexico and Texas.

References:

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