

# Pest Profile



**Photo credit:** April Nobile, California Academy of Sciences  
(Specimen CASENT0008659; from <https://www.antweb.org>)

**Common Name:** Ghost ant (black headed ant)

**Scientific Name:** *Tapinoma melanocephalum*

**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 1.3 – 1.5 mm  Queens are 2.6 mm	Workers have a dark head, base of the antennae, and thorax. Their antennae segments, legs, and abdomen are light yellow. They have 12 segmented antennae with segments that increase in width towards the tip, a one-part waist, and an opening at the end of the abdomen (acidiopore). They lack a stinger.  Queens are brown. The colonies have multiple queens (polygynous).
<b>Pupa (if applicable)</b>		

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

**Host(s):** The ghost ant prefers sweets and feeds on honeydew from hemipterans that feed on plant juices.

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

The ghost ant is omnivorous, eating both animals (mostly insects) and plants but prefers sweets and facilitates damage to plants by tending their hemipteran pests. They forage on sweets in buildings but also eat fatty, oily foods. The workers are able to penetrate packaging to get at foods. In greenhouses, the ghost ant is a major pest where they eat a variety of beneficial insects.

The ghost ant is a household pest and often nests in a variety of places in buildings including cracks and crevices, curtain rods, in potted plants, between cabinets and books, and even within clothes irons. Outside, ghost ants nest in trees and shrubs and along foundations and porches from which they may entire houses through small cracks and wires. They require high humidity and usually nest near water. Their activities are most associated with bathrooms and kitchens.

In some areas the ghost ant is a major structural pest. The ghost ant is a major household pest in some parts of Florida.

Ghost ants are a tramp species having been transported to many parts of the world from their origin in Africa or Asia. These ants occur in California, Florida, Hawaii, the Pacific Northwest, and Texas.

**References:**

Ghost Ant. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.tsusinvasives.org/home/database/tapinoma-melanocephalum>

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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*Tapinoma melanocephalum*. (2019). Retrieved from [https://www.antwiki.org/wiki/Tapinoma\\_melanocephalum](https://www.antwiki.org/wiki/Tapinoma_melanocephalum)