

Pest Profile



Photo credit: April Nobile, California Academy of Sciences
(Specimen CASENT 0005712; from <https://www.antweb.org>)

Common Name: Maricopa harvester ant

Scientific Name: *Pogonomyrmex maricopa*

Order and Family: Order Hymenoptera; Family Formicidae

Size and Appearance:

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg		
Larva/Nymph		
Adult	Workers range from 5.5 mm – 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 (called a psammophore) on the posterior lower portion of the head, behind the mouthparts.</p> <p>The Maricopa harvester ant is reddish brown in color and has lines of texture on the head (rugae) but the thorax texture is punctate. These ants usually lack the dorsal spines. The body color is a light to dark red with a shiny</p>

		<p>gaster (last segments of the abdomen).</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 that contains the most toxic of insect venoms and causes persistent pain. The Maricopa harvester ant may have the most toxic venom of any ant or insect. 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 Maricopa harvester is native to North America and Mexico. In the USA, this ant is found in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah.

References:

Cole, A.C. (1968). *Pogonomyrmex harvester ants: a study guide of the genus in North America*.

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.

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

Taber, S.W. (1998). *The world of the harvester ant*. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press.