

## Beneficial Species Profile



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

**Common Name:** Tropical Fire Ant (TFA)

**Scientific Name:** *Solenopsis geminata*

**Order and Family:** Order Hymenoptera; Family Formicidae

**Size and Appearance:**

	Length (mm)	Appearance
<b>Egg</b>		
<b>Larva/Nymph</b>	Vary from 0.63mm (newly hatched) to 5.2 mm (major workers)	
<b>Adult</b>	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)
<b>Pupa (if applicable)</b>		

**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 Benefits (predator, parasitoid, pollinator, etc.):**

TFA as an omnivore is beneficial as it eats many different pests of agricultural and horticultural plants. What they eat varies with the tropical region in which they are found. In the USA, they eat the cotton boll weevil; all developmental stages of the cinch bug (*Blissus insularis*); and the soybean-eating velvetbean moth (*Anticarsia gemmatalis*). It also feeds on cutworms and grasshoppers in Florida, and maggots and adults of the Mediterranean fruit fly (*Ceratitis capitata*) and oriental fruit flies (*Dacus dorsalis*) in Hawaii.

TFA eat pests of livestock including screwworm maggots (*Cochliomyia hominivorax* and *C. macellaria*); the disease-carrying house fly (*Musca domestica*); the green bottle fly (*Phaenicia* species); cattle tick (*Boophilus microplus*); and the giant introduced African land snail (*Achtina fulica*).

TIFA also is an important recycler, feeding on many kinds of detritus and scavenged remains of plants and animals.

**References:**

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