

## Little Fire Ant

*Wasmannia auropunctata*

**Spreading in Hawaii. Present on Hawaii Island. Detected on Kauai, Oahu, and Maui.**

The little fire ant is a stinging ant often moved around in plant material. Lacking competition or predators in Hawaii, this ant can outcompete and take over. Since these ants can live in trees, ants often rain down on people.



Photo credit: Melody Euaparadorn, Hawaii Ant Lab, [littlefireants.com](http://littlefireants.com)



Photo credit: Hawaii Ant Lab



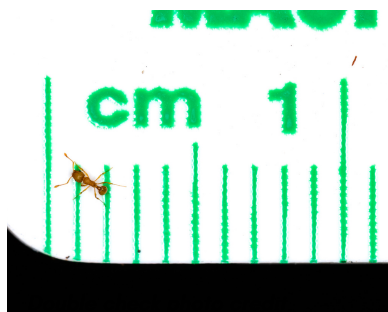
## Impacts

- Little fire ants (LFA) form cooperative supercolonies and outcompete other ant species.
- LFA sting when trapped, stings can number in the hundreds leaving painful itchy welts that last for up to a week.
- Stings in animals' eyes can lead to clouding and blindness
- Disrupt natural systems and cause declines in insect biodiversity.
- LFA farm aphids and scale insects that promote disease and reduce plant health.



## Identification

- Tiny, 1/16th in (2mm) long, and uniformly orange, reddish-orange, or brownish-orange in color.
- No visible nest or mound as a colony can live underneath moss in a tree or leaves on the ground.
- Detected most often when people are stung, generally on the neck or torso.
- Domesticated animals with cloudy corneas can also indicate the presence of LFA.



Little fire ants are tiny, only about 2 mm long. Photo credit: Zach Pezzillo



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# Little Fire Ant

*Wasmannia auropunctata*

Present on Hawaii Island. Detected on Kauai, Oahu, and Maui.



## Vectors/Commodities

- Potted plants.
- Mulch or soil.
- Any materials stored outside



## Distribution

- Native to South America, LFA have spread throughout the tropics reaching Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Tahiti, and most recently, Guam and Hawaii.
- In Hawaii, distribution and response vary by island: On Hawaii Island, LFA are increasingly widespread. Smaller incipient infestation exist on Kauai, Oahu, and Maui and are targeted for containment and eradication.



Photo credit: Melody Euaparadorn, Hawaii Ant Lab, [littlefireants.com](http://littlefireants.com) © Melody Euaparadorn



Photo credit: Masako Cordray

Animals living in areas infested with little fire ants can suffer blinding.



## Best Management Practices

- Consider sourcing options and the distribution of little fire ants when purchasing plants.
- BOLO: Be on the lookout! Regularly inspect the nursery for indications of little fire ants. Quarantine and survey new plant material and material that has been stored outside before incorporating it into stock.
  - Conduct nursery-wide surveys every 3-6 months.
  - Visually inspecting plant material
- Outside of Hawaii Island, report any suspect LFA to [643pest.org](http://643pest.org) or by phone 643-PEST (7378). On Hawaii Island, contact the Hawaii Ant Lab for further instructions.



Photo credit: Melody Euaparadorn, Hawaii Ant Lab, [littlefireants.com](http://littlefireants.com)

little fire ants farm scale insects that reduce plant health.



## Selected References:

- Hawaii Ant Lab <https://littlefireants.com/>
- Invasive Species Committees of Hawaii, Little fire ant information <https://stoptheant.org/>

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