

Tropical fire ant (362)

Summary

- Worldwide distribution. Common in many Pacific island countries. Ground-nesting in sunny agricultural, forestry, grassland areas. Aggressive, painful sting. Among world's 100 worse invasive species.
- Nests slightly raised mounds, radiating below surface. Many hundreds per ha. Eats seeds, other insects, reptiles, amphibians, honeydew.
- Direct damage to seeds, plant parts, hoses, loss of biodiversity; indirectly by defending aphids, mealybugs, scales and whiteflies from natural enemies.
- Queens, males and three types of worker: minor, major and intermediate, that have changing tasks. Nests mostly with many queens, some single.
- Tramp ant. Spread by queens leaving the nest, nuptial flight then new site, or budding; spread with trade in horticultural.
- Biosecurity: requires risk assessments, regulations preventing introduction, protocols in case of breaches, and ability to make rapid response. Pacific Ant Prevention Plan available (IUCN/SSC Invasive Specialist Group).
- Cultural control: hot water at 47°C kills ants; over 49°C kills plants.
- Chemical control: use (i) stomach poisons (fipronil, Amdro[®], borax), (ii) growth regulators (methoprene, pyriproxyfen), (iii) nerve poisons (bifenthrin, fipronil, imidacloprid). See (<http://piat.org.nz/getting-rid-of-ants>).

Common Name

Tropical fire ant, tropical red fire ant, ginger ant, red ant.

Scientific Name

Solenopsis geminata



Photo 1. Small worker, *Solenopsis geminata*, side view.



Photo 2. Small worker, *Solenopsis geminata*, front of head.



Photo 3. Large worker, *Solenopsis geminata*, showing large, squarish head.



Photo 4. Large worker, *Solenopsis geminata*, side view of head.



Photo 5. Queen, *Solenopsis geminata*, with wings.

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Information from CABI (2017) *Solenopsis geminata* (tropical fire ant). Crop Protection Compendium. (<https://www.cabi.org/cpc/datasheet/50566>); and Pacific Invasive Ant Toolkit. (<http://piat.org.nz/index.php?page=tropical-fire-ant>); and *Solenopsis geminata*. AntWiki. (http://www.antwiki.org/wiki/Solenopsis_geminata); and AntWeb. (<https://www.antweb.org/description.do?genus=solenopsis&species=geminata&rank=species>); and from *Solenopsis geminata* (2018) Global Invasive Species Database. (<http://www.iucn.org/speciesname/Solenopsis+geminata>). Photo 1 Simon Hinkley & Ken Walker (2001) Tropical fire ant (*Solenopsis geminata*). Museum of Victoria. PaDIL - (<http://www.padil.gov.au>). Photos 2-5 Tracy Smith (2005) Tropical fire ant (*Solenopsis geminata*). Department of Agriculture Western Australia. PaDIL - (<http://www.padil.gov.au>).

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