

Information Sheet

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Monitoring and Control of Ginger Ants in Nurseries

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APPEARANCE AND BIOLOGY

Ginger ants (*Solenopsis geminata*), also known as tropical fire ants have been established in the Northern Territory since 1915 or earlier. They should not be confused with fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) which do not occur in the Northern Territory. Ginger ants are 2.4-6.0 mm in length and are orange-brown or red-brown in colour. They build nests in open areas or under rocks. Sometimes a mound of loose soil and seeds can be seen around the entrance. If disturbed, the ants may bite and sting. The sting is usually painful and may produce an itchy sore.

There are many other types of ants that may be confused with ginger ants. For example, *Tetramorium bicarinatum*, *Iridomyrmex pallidus*, *Monomorium* spp. and *Pheidole* spp. Such 'other' ants may also be seen in nurseries but they usually do not give a painful bite or sting.

FEEDING HABITS

Ginger ants feed on grass seeds that they gather and store in their nests. In some cropping areas in the NT, the ants chew on emerging seedlings, recently planted seeds and other live plant material. Ginger ants will also tend honeydew producing insects such as mealybugs, and feed on other insects and animal matter. In nurseries, they can nest in the soil of potted plants and be transported to other properties. To control the spread of ginger ants, they should be monitored in nurseries.

MONITORING

Ginger ants can be lured into baits for monitoring. One method involves placing a spoonful of tinned tuna at various sites around the nursery. The tuna baits should be checked after 1-2 hours. Any ginger ants and other ants attracted to this type of fish bait will appear at the tuna baits and this will provide an indication of whether certain ants are present prior to treatment. If the species of ant cannot be determined by growers, a sample can be provided to the Entomology Section at Berrimah Farm for identification.

CONTROL

Although the main ant targeted in nurseries is the ginger ant, other pest ants should also be controlled for the purpose of interstate export.

The most effective way to control ginger ants is to bait them with hydramethylnon (Amdro® Granular Ant Bait) as directed on the product label. Sprays such as permethrin and chlorpyrifos may assist in controlling ginger ants as well as other ants in the nursery. Permethrin and chlorpyrifos sprays should be applied as directed on the product labels. If 'Amdro ®' is the preferred treatment, chemical sprays should not be applied at the same time as they may repel the ants from the bait.

Plants for export interstate may require specific treatment. Please contact NT Quarantine on 8999 2138 for more information.

For further information on this publication please contact the Entomology Section, Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines on email: insectinfo.dpifm@nt.gov.au. Other pest ants are described in Factsheet ENT1 "Ants in the Household and Garden". To obtain a copy visit the website listed below.

Specimens for identification can be submitted to the reception at Berrimah Agricultural Laboratories, Berrimah Farm, Makagon Road, Berrimah.

Photographs taken by Haidee Brown.



Solenopsis geminata (major worker)



Solenopsis geminata (minor worker)

Please visit us on our website at www.entomology.nt.gov.au

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