

What Is the Little Fire Ant?

The little fire ant (LFA) is a relatively new invasive stinging ant. Unlike the much larger tropical fire ants which also sting but are widespread and have been here since the 1800's, LFA form incredibly high populations. LFA infestations are 3-dimensional—ants on the ground, up in plants and trees, and in our homes. Besides stinging people, LFA harm crops, businesses, and even our pets—repeated stings to the eyes of pets can lead to blindness. LFA can also invade natural areas and harm birds, insects, and other animals. They are more than just a nuisance, LFA threaten our health, our environment, our economy, and quality of life.



LFA infestation under a nursery weed mat

Where there's hope

When LFA were first discovered in 1999 in the Puna area of Hawai'i island, the infestation already spanned 40 acres on multiple properties, and there were no effective ways to kill LFA colonies in trees.

Since then, the Hawai'i Ant Lab (HAL) has pioneered treatment methods that are being used to control infestations. Eradication has been achieved in some neighborhoods where LFA was found and reported early, and where the community supported the HAL approach.

Treatment and inspection of nursery plants has reduced the spread of LFA, although some LFA continue to slip through. Be aware that LFA can hide in plants, logs, greenwaste, and even cars and materials stored in infested areas. Collect and submit ant samples from your yard, home or business at least once each year, and always when you buy new plants. Mahalo for your help!

Detect — Report — Stop the Little Fire Ant

DETECT

HDOA locations for dropping off or mailing samples:

Kaua'i: 4398A Pua Loke St, Lihu'e, HI 96766

O'ahu: 1428 S. King St, Honolulu, HI 96814

Maui: 635 Mua St, Kahului, HI 96732

Moloka'i: C/O The Nature Conservancy
23 Pueo Pl, Kaunakakai, HI 96748

Hawai'i: Hawai'i Ant Lab / HDOA
16 E. Lanikaula St, Hilo, HI 96720

REPORT

Report a suspected LFA infestation to any of the following places:

Hawai'i Department of Agriculture Statewide Hotline: 643-PEST (7378)

Kaua'i Invasive Species Committee: 821-1490

O'ahu Invasive Species Committee: 266-7994

Maui Invasive Species Committee: 573-6472

Moloka'i Invasive Species Committee: 553-5236

Big Island Invasive Species Committee: 933-3340

Hawai'i Ant Lab: 315-5656 (Hawai'i Island)

LEARN MORE

For more information about LFA, visit
www.StopTheAnt.org or www.littlefireants.com
or hdoa.hawaii.gov/pi/main/lfainfo/

Photo credits: Front: top USGS BRD Ellen VanGelder; middle and bottom Cas Vanderwoude. Inside: right Zach Pezzillo; middle and bottom HDOA

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Little Fire Ant

Wasmannia auropunctata



LFA on chopstick



Repeated stings blind pets



Stings

Detect-Report-Stop the Little Fire Ant

Protect Your Family

DETECT

Supplies: peanut butter, disposable chopsticks, zip-top bags, marking pen.



1. Place sticks with a **thin** smear of peanut butter* every few feet in and around plants in your yard, garden, and lānai. Focus on shady, moist areas, the bottoms of pots, and where plants' leaves meet the stem. **Use regular peanut butter, not natural or fat-free. For those with peanut allergy, use pieces of luncheon meat and tongs to retrieve the pieces.*
2. Leave the sticks in place for **1 hour** during the cool part of the day.
3. Carefully pick up **each stick with ants** and place them into a zip-top bag, making sure the ants don't fall off.



4. Seal the bag. Label it with your name, address, and phone number. Put it in your **freezer overnight** to kill the ants.
5. Deliver or mail the sample to the Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA) office or your island Invasive Species Committee (see back for locations).



Could they be LFA?

- LFA are tiny, $\frac{1}{16}$ inch, or about as long as a penny is thick
- Orange-red in color
- Stings feel like electric pinpricks, then itch for days



Tropical fire ant

LFA

Don't confuse them with Tropical fire ants.

- Tropical fire ants are common and widespread stinging ants
- Stings occur on legs and feet when standing near nests



An entire LFA colony can fit in a macadamia nut shell.

- LFA colonies can live in tiny places which makes them easy to spread
- LFA nest in moist, shady areas: in plants, trees, logs, under rocks, and in materials stored in infested areas

View the 3-minute video "[How to Test for LFA](http://www.StopTheAnt.org/resources)" at www.StopTheAnt.org/resources

REPORT

Call the HDOA statewide **pest hotline at 643-PEST** to report that you might have LFA. Drop off (or mail) the sample (zip-top bag with frozen ants) to any HDOA office (see back for locations).

HDOA will contact you when the ants are identified. **Do not disturb the ants and do not control or treat the area.** This will make the nests difficult to find and possibly spread them further.

STOP the LFA

If HDOA confirms that you don't have the LFA, congratulations and thank you! Remain vigilant. **Always quarantine and test** any new plants, cut flowers, plant materials, mulch, soil, and other items that might contain LFA.

If HDOA confirms that you have LFA, they will explain your options and ask for your help. In general, we will work with you to control or eradicate it if found on islands within the state where they are not known to be established, but we need your help to find it and your permission to do the work, which can prevent LFA from becoming established.