

Fire Ant



GARDEN EARTH
NATURALIST

ECO-SERVICE CARDS

FIRE ANT

FAMILY: Formicidae

ORDER: Hymenoptera

IDENTIFICATION CLUES



- ◆ 1/16 - 1/4 inch long
- ◆ dull yellow to red or black
- ◆ the narrow waist between the thorax and abdomen has two segments
- ◆ the head is relatively large with segmented antennae



Where to Look:

Fire ants are found in fields, lawns, gardens and forest edges. Look for the distinct sandy mounds which can be from 6 inches to 3 feet across.

Who Eats It?

Because of their aggressive behavior and vicious sting, fire ants have few enemies. However, pathogenic bacteria and fungi, nematodes, mites and flies can attack fire ants. Armadillos also eat fire ants.



LIFE CYCLE

COMPLETE
METAMORPHOSIS

Fire Ants live in colonies in the ground. Most of the ants in a colony are workers. The queen lays eggs and the workers care for the larvae and pupae. Winged males and females leave the nest to mate and start new colonies.

What It Eats.

Fire ants eat primarily insects. They also eat seeds, fruits, aphid honeydew, vegetables and flowers and will even attack baby birds in the nest and domestic fowl.



Did You Know

Our most common species of fire ant was accidentally imported to the US by ship from South America 80-90 years ago. These imported ants have almost eliminated our native species of fire ants. Be cautious around their mounds. They are aggressive and will inflict a painful sting.

Role in the Ecosystem

Fire ants are aggressive predators, scavengers and plant defenders.