

## TACKLING

# European Fire Ants (*Myrmica rubra*)

Invasive species have significant impacts on the environment, human health, infrastructure and the economy in the Metro Vancouver region.

European fire ants were first recorded in British Columbia in 2010, and they have since impacted many communities across Metro Vancouver. They are often spread through human activities, nesting in garden and landscape materials. These ants react quickly and aggressively to defend their nest. With their distinctive swarming and stinging behaviour, they are one of the most concerning invasive species in the region.

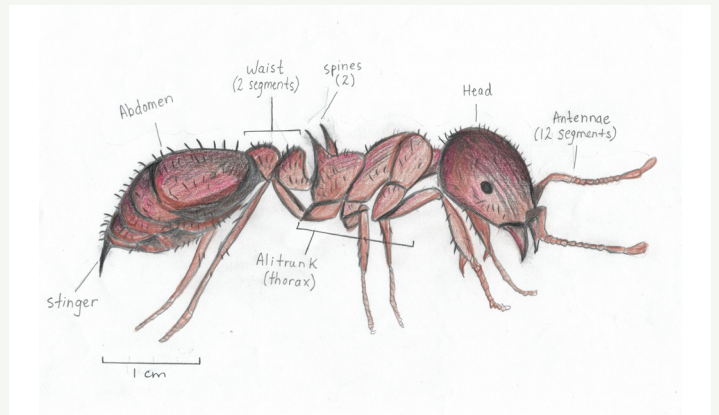
## IMPACTS

The presence of European fire ants in gardens, yards, parks, golf courses and green spaces make these areas unusable. If disturbed, European fire ants will repeatedly sting people, pets and wildlife that come close to their nests. The stings are painful, itchy, and can cause serious allergic reactions. European fire ants also displace native ants that play an important role in pollinating and propagating native plants.

## IDENTIFICATION

There are many species of ants in British Columbia, including others that are red and sting. Identification should be confirmed by an expert.

- **Colonies:** Underground and not usually visible (large ant hills are typically from other ant species); located in moist soils, such as in lawns and garden beds, and along tree roots, rocks, logs, pathways and beaches; each colony can have many queens and thousands of worker ants



Anatomy of a worker ant

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European fire ants in soil

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- **Ants:** Reddish-brown, 4-5 millimetres in length (queens are larger); two waist segments in the middle of the body, two spines that point backwards, and a stinger (features may only be seen with a magnifying glass)

## PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Prevention is the best way to reduce the spread of European fire ants across the region and beyond. Potted plants, soil, mulches, and similar materials should be inspected for ants. It is best not to transport infested soil or plants. Effective invasive species management typically involves a variety of control methods. Insecticide use is currently the only effective control method available for European fire ants in British Columbia. The following table summarizes the recommended techniques for controlling European fire ants on private property or where permission has been granted by the land owner or manager. **Wear protective gear including gloves, closed-toed shoes or boots, tuck pants into socks, and seal other gaps between clothing to avoid exposed skin and prevent stings.**

CONTROL STRATEGY	TECHNIQUES	NOTES
Chemical	<b>Dig the soil to expose nests and apply the insecticide Permethrin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For small to medium size infestations</li> <li>• Check federal, provincial and local pesticide use regulations</li> <li>• May require a professional and use is restricted under some conditions, such as sites near water</li> <li>• Follow label directions</li> <li>• May cause unintended environmental or health impacts</li> </ul>
	<b>Place purchased baits (2% boric acid in sugar solution) around the nests during the summer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow label directions</li> <li>• Replace weekly</li> <li>• Will not eliminate nests but may temporarily reduce the population and prevent spread</li> <li>• May cause unintended environmental or health impacts</li> </ul>

Sites should be monitored regularly and follow-up treatments applied where needed.

## How Can You Help?

- Stop the spread of European fire ants! Do not move infested soil or plants.
- To reduce the spread of invasive species, dispose of yard waste and soil appropriately. Visit your municipality's website for more information.
- If you also have invasive plants, check out the factsheets for those species. Visit [growgreenguide.ca](http://growgreenguide.ca) for non-invasive plant suggestions.
- Download the '**Report Invasives BC**' app to identify and report invasive species.

For the complete set of best management practices for European fire ants, and other key invasive species, visit [MetroVancouver.org](http://MetroVancouver.org) and search 'Invasive Species'.



Experts often use a grid of apple slices to find the nests

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