

# INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

## EUROPEAN FIRE ANT

(*Myrmica rubra*)

### HAVE YOU SEEN THIS ANIMAL?

#### DESCRIPTION

European Fire Ants...

- Are very small; worker ants are 4-5 mm long and queens can be up to 9 mm.
- Are reddish-brown in colour.
- Have a constricted waist with two segments (most ants native to B.C. have a constricted waist and one segment).
- Have two backward-pointing spines on the middle body section
- Can deliver a painful sting.



Photo credit: Sean McCann, cbc.ca

#### REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES

Download the App!



[www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species](http://www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species)

#### PRIMARY THREAT:

*European Fire Ants form such dense colonies that they can severely decrease the ability for recreational use of natural areas, including one's own backyard, due to the risk of disturbing a nest and being swarmed and stung.*

#### SPREAD

The main method for introduction and spread of European Fire Ants is the movement and distribution of infested horticulture material, including potted plants, soil, and mulch. Mature colonies of European Fire Ants have an average of 15 queens and up to 1000 workers. They spread when a queen and a small group of workers leave the nest and start a new colony.

Areas that hold moisture and warmth provide ideal habitat for European Fire Ants. They will nest in lawns and grassy areas, garden beds, under wood or yard waste piles, and under rocks or landscape stones.



Photo credit: modernpest.com

For more information: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/invasive-species>



# EUROPEAN FIRE ANT (*Myrmica rubra*)

## DISTRIBUTION & STATUS

As the name implies, European Fire Ants are native to Europe. Since 2010, this species has been observed in various locations throughout British Columbia, including the lower mainland, Fraser Valley, and Vancouver Island. This species was also discovered in the Naramata area of the Okanagan Valley.

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## LOOK-ALIKES:

It can be difficult to distinguish the European Fire Ant from other ant species in B.C. It differs from many, but not all, native ant species in having **two body nodes between the thorax and the abdomen**. If uncertain:

**Step 1:** Collect a sample. Instructions on how to do this can be found [here](#).

**Step 2:** Send your samples to one of the following locations for identification. Please include your name and the date and location where the samples were collected.

**Preferred location:** Plant Health Laboratory, Ministry of Agriculture: download and complete the [necessary form](#).

**Alternative Location:** Dr. Rob Higgins, Department of Biological Sciences, Thompson Rivers University, 805 TRU Way, Kamloops, BC, V2C 0C8

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Reduce watering and avoid/remove anything from area that traps heat and moisture.
- Check for any ants being carried in garden products (soil, mulch, plants etc.) and return product if found.
- Do not move soil, mulch, or plants from infested areas.
- Talk to your neighbours about the impacts of fire ants and work together to control and prevent their spread.
- Ant Control:
  - Use insecticidal baits registered for use in Canada.
  - Contact local pest control if issue becomes unmanageable.
  - See [here](#) for additional information.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The European fire ant injects venom under the skin that initially burns (30 minutes to two hours), then itches for a few days to a week.



Photo credit: Gary Alpert, Harvard University, Bugwood.org

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