

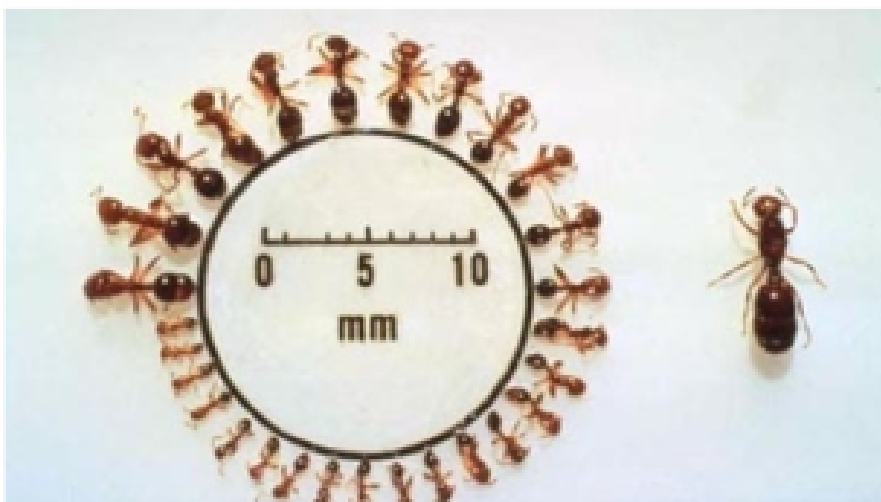
[Home](#) » [UF/IFAS Extension Nassau County](#) » Invasive Fire Ants In Growing Operations

Invasive Fire Ants in Growing Operations



Introduction

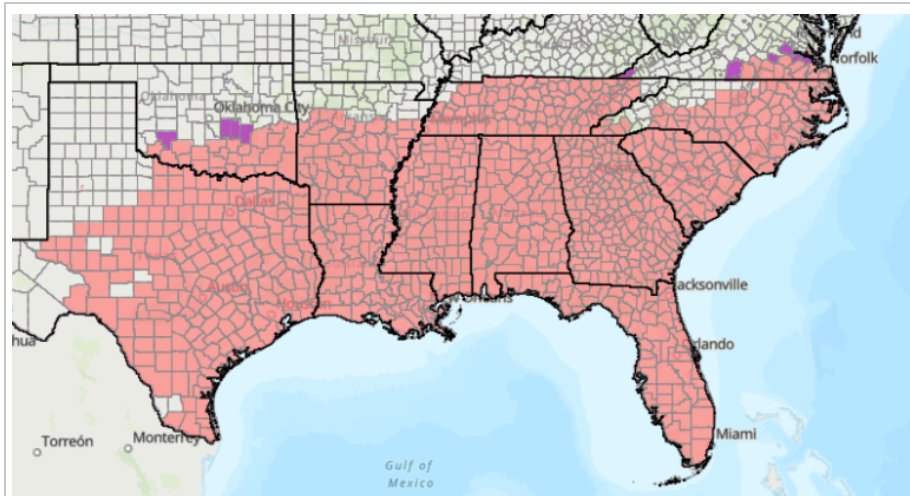
Red imported fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*), invasive to North America, are aggressive and cause painful stings. They are red to black and range from 1/8" to 1/4" in length and normally have a deep red thorax and solid black abdomen. They can lead to disruptions in agriculture, especially if a young person, animal, valuable cash crop, or allergic person is attacked or infested. Fire ants can girdle young trees, damage young plants, and feed on seed crops.



Imported fire ants size chart. Photo: USDA

Origin & Spread

Originally from South America, fire ants have unintentionally spread throughout the southeastern United States. They hitchhike on equipment and nursery plant materials. Therefore, integrated pest management is crucial to keep numbers low. Click photo to see the current USDA quarantine for imported fire ants.



Current imported fire ant quarantine area. Photo: USDA. Click to see live map

Nests

Fire ants build nests in row crops, gardens, lawns, nurseries, pastures, and prefer sunny locations generally around trees, stumps, rotting logs, or under buildings. Mounds look like loose, grainy soil loosely piled up in a small hill sometimes up to 24' high.

Management

Fire ants should be managed using integrated pest management in growing operations. It is important to identify the ant hill and morphology of the ant to be sure before treatment.

Resources

- “Managing Imported Fire Ants in Urban Areas.” University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, n.d., <https://fieldreport.caes.uga.edu/publications/B1191/managing-imported-fire-ants-in-urban-areas>



Fire ant mound near rotting stump

- “Managing Fire Ants with Baits.” East, William, and Katelyn Kesheimer. Alabama Cooperative Extension System, 11 June 2020, <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/crop-production/managing-fire-ants-with-bait>

- “Imported Fire Ants.” Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 24 Feb. 2026, <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-pests-diseases/ifa>



1

by **David Hébert**

Posted: June 1, 2026

Last Updated: June 1, 2026

Category: [Florida-Friendly Landscaping](#), [Home Landscapes](#),
[Lawn](#), [Pests & Disease](#), [UF/IFAS Extension](#)

More From Blogs.IFAS

- **November Checklist**
 - **In The Garden, We Grow: A Garden's Pest**
 - **In The Garden, We Grow**
 - **Cultivating Curiosity Podcast: Check Out The New Season!**
-