

Managing Little Fire Ants In the Home Garden

Prevention

- Remove rubbish or piles of debris from around your house.
- Trim vegetation, especially close to or touching your house.
- Choose hardier plants that require less irrigation around your house.
- Quarantine & test all plant materials that you bring onto your property for fire ants before setting plants out (see below.)

Testing for Little Fire Ant

- ✓ Smear chopsticks (cut in half,) popsicle sticks, or coffee stirrers with a very thin layer of smooth peanut butter.
- ✓ A good spot is where a banana leaf meets the banana tree.
- ✓ Ants need water to survive, so they like dark, moist areas. Shady, irrigated areas are good places to check for the Little Fire Ants.
- ✓ Place the peanut butter side up & leave out where the Little Fire Ant might be.
- ✓ Check your potted plants by pushing the stick into the soil of the pot, peanut butter end up.
- ✓ Leave the sticks in place for about an hour.
- ✓ Pick up the stick very carefully to avoid dislodging ants & look for ants on the peanut butter.
 - Are they orange or red?
 - Are they no bigger than 1/16 inch (the thickness of a penny)?
 - Do they fall off the stick easily?
- ✓ If yes to these questions, you may have Little Fire Ants.



- ✓ Put the stick with the ants into a zip top bag. Write your name, location, email address & phone number on the bag. Place the bag into the freezer overnight.
- ✓ The next day, mail the zip top bag to **Hilo Ant Lab, 16 E. Lanikaula St., Hilo, HI 96720** (808) 989-9289
- ✓ **To test new mulch deliveries:**
 - Quarantine – prepare area before the mulch delivery by spraying a barrier pesticide around the outside of this area. Make a band of 4-6 feet of pesticide around the outside of the area where the mulch will be place.
 - Once the mulch has been delivered, cover it with a clear or black plastic sheet if at all possible. This will help heat up the material and may kill some of the LFA.
 - Test the mulch on the outside of the pile with peanut butter sticks as above. Cover the sticks loosely with leaves or litter, as the ants don't like to be out in the open.
 - Proceed as above for testing.

Treatment

Whichever treatment you use, always follow the product's label directions

➤ Ant Baits

- Your first line of defense because they are very effective & minimize the use of pesticides
- You can use a hand-held fertilizer spreader to spread the bait around your entire property
- Ants will harvest the bait and take them back to the nest and kill most or all of the ants.
- Spread bait per product label over entire property so that even small nests will be killed.
- Bait for every 4-6 weeks for several months, then re-evaluate effectiveness.
- May use bait stations with some baits. Follow label directions
- Examples of Ant Bait:

➤ Siesta Fire Bait	Amdro – look for type that kills Little Fire Ants
➤ Pro bait	Maxforce Complete
➤ Extinguish Plus	Advion fire ant bait
➤ Tango	



➤ Barrier Treatments

- Use to isolate new plant materials on your property or your property from your neighbors' properties.
- Do not mix bait and barrier treatments. Follow label directions.
- Can be a spray or granule and can be applied to the soil, hard surfaces or vegetation.
- Can stay active for a month or even longer
- Any ants or other insects that cross the treated surface will die.
- Read the label to know which product is a bait and which is a barrier treatment.
- Examples of Barrier Treatments:
 - Ortho Home Defense Max granules
 - Ortho Home Defense ready to spray
 - Triazicide Once and Done Insect Killer



➤ Contact Sprays

- Sprayed directly on target pest. Generally not useful with Little Fire Ants because they do nothing to destroy the nest, but are useful to remove ants from a particular location in a short period of time.

➤ Ants Around Food Plants

- Check label to be sure product can be used around food plants and for the appropriate method to use around these plants. Check the label for the specific crop that you want to protect.
- Examples of baits available for use around food include:

➤ Esteem Fire Ant Bait	Extinguish Pro
➤ Tango	Boric Acid Baits mixed to attract protein-loving ants)
➤ Amdro Pro	

➤ Ants in Vegetation

- Little Fire Ants often nest in foliage & branches of trees.
- Need to use a bait that can be applied to trees, such as gel baits or boric acid baits.
- Examples of these baits:
 - Tango
 - Boric Acid Bait mixed to attract protein-loving ants
- Examples of approved pesticides:
 - Orange Guard
 - Eliminator Bug Killer Sevin Concentrate
 - Gardentech Sevin Concentrate Bug Killer
 - Gardentech Sevin Ready-to-Spray Bug
 - Bisect L
 - Talstar P

➤ **Hawaii Ant Lab website: <http://www.littlefireants.com/>**