



“Spot the Ant, Stop the Ant”

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Ants are seemingly everywhere in Hawai'i – in our kitchens, our parks, our farms, and of course our gardens. Anyone who has tried gardening in Hawai'i is undoubtedly familiar with at least a few different ant species that tend and protect pestiferous aphids, scales, mealybugs, hoppers and psyllids in exchange for the sugary honeydew that these pests produce. But ants aren't just a nuisance in our homes and gardens; they have ecological effects from the shoreline to mountain tops, everywhere they have become established. It is amazing to think that there are now nearly 60 introduced ant species that are established in Hawai'i, and with each new species that arrives, the potential for additional impacts to our natural and agricultural ecosystems, economy, and health increases.

On Hawai'i Island these ants are established on hundreds (if not thousands) of acres, and eradication with the current technologies and funds is not possible. Residents and business owners are urged to learn about how to manage or minimize the impacts of the ants by visiting the Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit/Hawai'i Ant Lab's (HAL) website at www.littlefireants.com.

On islands where little fire ants are not widespread, the HAL, Hawai'i Department of Agriculture, University of Hawai'i, the Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species, and the Invasive Species Committees are working together to control or eradicate the ants. **Your help is needed in finding and reporting suspected little fire ant infestations while they are still small enough to be eradicated.**

That's why Governor Ige is proclaiming September “*Spot the Ant, Stop the Ant*” month. Hawai'i residents are urged to test their yard for the presence of little fire ants using chopsticks and a small dab of peanut butter. Ant samples can be placed in zip top bags, frozen to kill the ants, and turned in to the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture for identification.

The recent spate of Little Fire Ant detections on O'ahu and Maui demonstrates just how easily ants can be spread around the islands in the course of our activities. Unfortunately, one of the easiest ways to import and spread ant colonies is through potted plants, which provide a perfect nesting medium and hiding place when plants are moved. Gardeners should be on alert when purchasing or sharing plant material.





Master Gardeners may receive questions about little fire ants, especially during “*Spot the Ant, Stop the Ant*” month. Your help is appreciated in getting the word out that it is important to test your yard or property at least once per year, and anytime you bring home new plant materials.

Find more information on little fire ants at www.StopTheAnt.org, by contacting your local Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture office, your island Invasive Species Committee, or the Hawai‘i Ant Lab.

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