

Pest Profile



Photo credit: April Nobile, California Academy of Sciences
(Specimen: CASENT 0005805; from <https://www.antweb.org>)

Common Name: Thief ant (sugar ant, grease ant, piss ant)

Scientific Name: *Solenopsis molesta*

Order and Family: Order Hymenoptera; Family Formicidae

Size and Appearance:

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg		
Larva/Nymph		
Adult	Workers range from 1.38 – 1.62 mm Queens are 4.68 – 5.64 mm Males are 3.48 – 4.32 mm	Workers are monomorphic and yellow in color. They have 10-segmented antennae ending in a two-part club, a two-part waist, and a stinger. Queens resemble workers but are larger. Colonies have multiple queens (polygynous).
Pupa (if applicable)		

Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.): Chewing

Host(s): Thief ants are omnivorous, feeding mostly on other insects and seeds, which they often steal from other ant colonies. They feed on honeydew from hemipterans that feed on plant juices, especially of corn.

Description of Damage (larvae and adults):

Thief ants are very small and may go unnoticed, which is how they can steal food from other colonies. They may eat seeds, leaving behind the seed hulls which destroys seed beds. They may do considerable damage to corn, sorghum, blackberries, and other crops. Because they eat carrion, they may transmit disease causing organisms. They may be an intermediate host for poultry tapeworms.

Thief ants may be pests in buildings, occurring in large numbers and possibly found in cabinets and within walls. In buildings, these ants forage readily on human foods, including sweets, oils, and fats.

Although thief ants have a stinger, the stinger is too small to be of concern to humans.

Thief ants are found throughout Canada, the USA, and northern Mexico.

References:

Klotz, J., Hansen, L., Pospichil, R. & Rust, M. (2008). *Urban ants of North America and Europe: identification, biology, and management*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Solenopsis molesta. (2019). Retrieved from https://www.antwiki.org/wiki/Solenopsis_molesta

Solenopsis molesta. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.schoolofants.org/species/122>