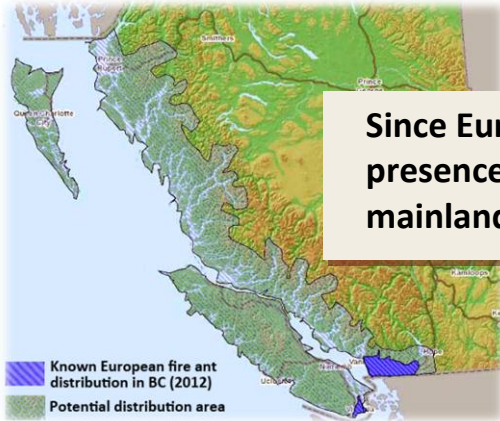


# EUROPEAN FIRE ANTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA



Since European fire ants were first found in BC in 2010, their presence has been confirmed in locations across the lower mainland, Fraser Valley and southern Vancouver Island.

## WHY ARE THEY A PROBLEM?

The behaviour of the European fire ant changes according to the temperature: when it is warm and humid the ants become much more active and are highly prone to swarm and sting. This species of ant forms dense colonies, severely compromising the use of yards, gardens and parks by residents, the public and animals.

The most probable pathway of introduction is through the movement and distribution of infested horticulture material, including **potted plants, soil and mulch.**



## WHAT CAN YOU DO ON YOUR PROPERTY?

The following methods of control have shown some success in managing fire ant infestations:

### Home-made Ant Bait Containers



### 1. Baits

- 0.25-1.0% Boric acid or 0.33-1.33% Borax (Laundry soap) baits
- The boric acid or Borax should be in a 25% sugar solution

### 2. Deterrents

- avoid/remove anything from area that traps heat and moisture

### 3. Stop the Introduction

- check landscaping supplies for ants and immerse roots in water for 1 hour if found

### 4. Education

*Paving stones, wood on the ground, lawn ornaments or lawn clutter all trap heat and moisture.*

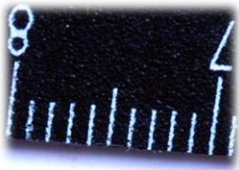


*Credit: Susan Horton*

## IF STUNG...

The European fire ant injects venom under the skin that initially burns (30 minutes to 2 hours) then itches for a few days to a week.

**If experiencing a stronger reaction than minor swelling, redness, discomfort, and itching: call HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1 for symptom advice, any time of the day or night. An extreme allergic (anaphylactic) reaction can be life-threatening and requires emergency care.**



## EUROPEAN FIRE ANT IDENTIFICATION

### General appearance:

- very small (approx. ½ cm), thin, reddish-brown in colour,
- a constricted waist with two segments (most native ants to BC have a constricted waist and one segment),
- two backward-pointing spines on middle body section.



**1. Collect specimen** - following the instructions on Dr. Robert Higgins website: [http://www.tru.ca/faculty/rhiggins/shipping\\_ants\\_for\\_identification.htm](http://www.tru.ca/faculty/rhiggins/shipping_ants_for_identification.htm)

**2. Send ant to specialist to confirm species** - to one of three locations below:

### Preferred Location:

Plant Health Laboratory, Ministry of Agriculture.  
Download and complete the necessary form at [www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/alien\\_form.pdf](http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/alien_form.pdf).

### Alternate Location 1:

Dr. Robert Higgins, Thompson Rivers University.  
Follow the instructions for collecting and shipping samples on Dr. Robert Higgins' website: [www.tru.ca/faculty/rhiggins/shipping\\_ants\\_for\\_identification.htm](http://www.tru.ca/faculty/rhiggins/shipping_ants_for_identification.htm)

### Alternate Location 2:

Natural History Section, Entomology Dept, Royal BC Museum – attn: Claudia Copley  
675 Belleville St, Victoria, BC V8W 9W2  
Collection and shipping instructions are the same as listed in Dr. Higgins' website.

Shipment must include:

- Collection Location (town & street address);
- Collection Date (dd/mm/yy);
- Collector's first and last name.

- Positive samples will NOT be reported to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), as this species is not a plant pest and is therefore not regulated under the federal Plant Protection Act.
- Specimens submitted to the Royal BC Museum will not be returned, and may be incorporated into the Museum collection, regardless of what the species turns out to be.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Contact your local government to report fire ant infestations or if you are seeking additional resources.**

For more information on the European fire ant please visit the following websites:

- Dr. Robert Higgins, Thompson Rivers University Research webpage: [www.tru.ca/faculty/rhiggins](http://www.tru.ca/faculty/rhiggins)
- BC Provincial Government website: [www.for.gov.bc.ca/hra/invasive-species/fire\\_ants.htm](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hra/invasive-species/fire_ants.htm)
- Invasive Species Council of BC: [www.bcinvasives.ca](http://www.bcinvasives.ca)