

Taming ants that tramp

Calling all Biosecurity Blitzers! Can you help us make sure invasive ants do not become serious pests in Australia? We are looking for all ant enthusiasts willing and able to lookout and record ants in your area and help us tame the ants that tramp.

WANTED - Western Australia citizens for this activity!

Other states and territories can still take part and record ants, but do not collect or mail samples outside your area without a proper permit, thanks.

What are tramp ants?

Tramp ants are a diverse group of invasive ants which are often inadvertently and easily transported widely across the globe by 'hitchhiking' with cargo in sea containers on ships, products moved on trains, household goods, potted plants, garbage, earthmoving machinery, the wheels of vehicles, in your work gear or hiding quietly in the caravan, camping gear or holiday suitcase.

Once tramp ants show up and establish in your neighbourhood they can have devastating effects on our ecosystems, economy, social and cultural amenities, and even human health.

Three tramp ant species have tramped their way into Western Australia! The browsing ant (*Lepisiota frauenfeldi*), the 'African ant' (*Lepisiota incisa*) and the Red imported fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta*).

For this activity, we are focused only on taming browsing ants. Both species of browsing ant have been detected in Perth, WA and are currently undergoing surveillance and eradication. DPIRD is asking for your help to track and tame these particular species of tramp ants as quickly as possible, thanks.

WANTED - Western Australia citizens for this activity!

Be on the lookout for these two browsing ants

Lepisiota frauenfeldi

The browsing ant *Lepisiota frauenfeldi* is native to southern Europe and thrive in a Mediterranean climate. This makes them ideally suited to Australian conditions. These aggressive ants form multi-queened super-colonies and monopolise food resources, quickly reaching very high populations. Our native ant species are at risk from these super-colonies because browsing ants will feed on native insects and other animals, as well as competing for resources. They could become a significant horticultural, environmental and domestic pest if they spread throughout Australia.

Lepisiota incisa



This is the other tramp ant species that is thought to originate in Africa. These tramp ants also form super-colonies and can reach large numbers very quickly. They specialise in colonising disturbed locations, making them very well suited to urban areas. These ants are able to take over native ecosystems by pushing out native insects and animals. If they are allowed to become established in Australia, and in particular Perth, WA they would become a major environmental, social and economic pest, impacting our livelihood and trade.

What to look for

The browsing ant, *Lepisiota frauenfeldi* (Fig. 1) are slender, shiny, and dark brown, about 3–4 mm in length. They are often seen in large numbers and run about in a haphazard manner when disturbed.



Figure 1. Up close and personal with a real browsing ant.



Figure 2. An officer's hand showing how small browsing ants really are.

The African browsing ant, *Lepisiota incisa* (Fig.3) are dark brown, shiny and fairly hairy, about 2 mm in length. They have a spike on their back just before the abdomen. Further study of this ant needs to be done to know its behaviour when the nests are disturbed.

Did you know?

- Some super-colony species have more than 200 queens.
- All worker ants are female.
- Browsing ants do not build obvious mounded nests. Instead, they can form nests under rocks or leaves and tend to the colony's eggs and larvae.
- Both of these tramp ants have been detected in Perth, WA.



Figure 3. *Lepisiota incisa* under the microscope. Notice any differences in the thoracic segments between the two species?

Activity goal

Look for, **photograph**, and **report** any ants you find tramping in different habitats so we can **map** the distribution of these kinds of ants in Australia and tame the ants that tramp.

IF in Western Australia, please collect ant samples and submit to the Pest and Disease Information Service at DPIRD after staff confirm with you via the MyPestGuide™ Reporter app to submit the sample collected. Store in freezer.

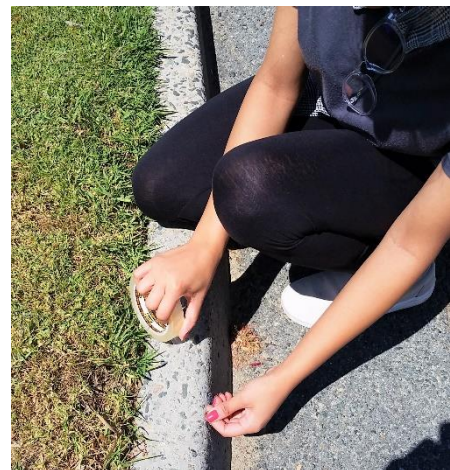
Materials required

1. A mobile device (phone or tablet) with [MyPestGuide™ Reporter](#) downloaded onto it.
2. A macro lens for your camera would be ideal, but is not essential.
3. [Instructions](#) on how to make a report.
4. Transparent/clear sticky tape (the wider the better)
5. White paper and a pencil
6. Zip lock bag
7. Envelope & stamp

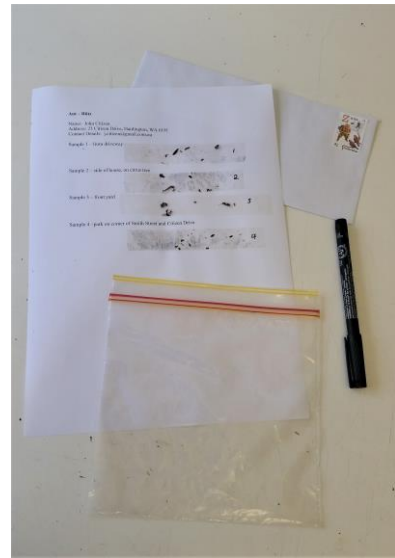


What to do

1. Survey various habitats for ants. Walk around your garden, backyard, park or school searching for ants. Check along footpath kerbing, reticulation tubing, lawn edges, driveways and tree trunks.
2. Find, report and collect multiple ant samples from different areas. Use the sticky side of transparent sticky tape to catch the ants.
3. Carefully press a piece of clear tape onto the ants, gently sticking them to the glue. Alternatively, brush the ants into a container using a paintbrush and seal container shut.



4. Gently adhere the tape to a piece of white paper.
5. If you see any ants, photograph and make a report using the [MyPestGuide™ Reporter](#) app. Photograph the habitat, the ants in their habitat and take clear close-ups of the ants.
6. Gently fold the paper and place it into a ziplock bag.
7. Place the ziplock bag in the freezer for 1-2 hours before sending ants through the mail.
8. Write your address and contact details on the piece of paper. Write down the sample no. from the MyPestGuide™ Reporter app for each ant sample reported. If you haven't made a report using the app then also describe where each sample was collected (e.g. backyard, driveway) and when. For next time, please try to use the free reporting app.
9. Place the paper + samples from freezer into an envelope and add a stamp.



Ant Blitz
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
Att: Pest and Disease Information Service
3 Baron-Hay Court
South Perth WA 6151

More information

1. Browsing ant information
<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/biosecurity/browsing-ants>
2. Ant identification is the key to successful control
<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/invasive-species/ant-identification-key-successful-control?page=0%2C1>

Acknowledgements

Photos courtesy of Pia Scanlon, DPIRD and Will Ericson <https://www.antweb.org>.

Important disclaimer

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