

Head in larger individuals proportionally broader with respect to length. First two segments of antennal club subequal. Clypeal carinae and clypeal teeth absent or obsolescent. *Specific characters:* Workers 1.8–3.0 mm. long. Dorsal surface of posterior border of head and dorsal surface of epinotum with fine transverse rugulae. Mesopleuron and side of epinotum sculptured, remainder of body largely smooth and shiny. Body hairs sparse, widely distributed, long and slender, suberect to erect. Body color pale yellowish or very light brown, with gaster noticeably infuscated, this infuscation varying in degree and extent.

Biology and Economic Importance

M. destructor lives in large colonies containing many fertile females. The ants nest in the soil or in buildings, depending largely upon whether they occur in tropical, semitropical, or temperate regions. Workers are highly predacious on other insects but also tend honeydew-excreting insects and feed on seeds. They move slowly in single file and appear to follow the trail by scent. The ants are a common and important house-infesting form. They are almost omnivorous and feed on such household foods as cookies, sweets, breads, meats, oils, greases, and animal substances. They gnaw holes in fabrics and rubber goods, and remove the rubber insulation from electric or telephone wires. (On one occasion they were reported to have apparently damaged exposed polyethylene cable by gnawing into it.) People are reported to have been bitten or stung fiercely while in bed. One investigator found bubonic plague bacteria in the feces of ants that had fed on plague-infected rats.

References: Wroughton, 1892b, p. 186; Wheeler, 1906c, pp. 23–24; Marlatt, 1916, p. 3; Clarke, 1922, pp. 329–333; Wheeler, 1926, pp. 10, 153, 221; Smith, 1936, p. 839; Kalshoven, 1937, pp. 65–71; O'Rourke, 1956, pp. 109–110; Kempf, 1960, pp. 506–507.

Solenopsis xyloni McCook

Southern fire ant. This native species ranges from California to South Carolina (southern part) and Florida (northwest corner). It is especially common in some of the Gulf Coast States. *S. xyloni* has been confused with the fire ant *Solenopsis geminata* (Fabricius) on many occasions.

Taxonomic Characters

Subfamily and generic characters: Polymorphic. Antenna 10-segmented, with 2-segmented club. Eye well-developed and with numerous ommatidia. Frontal carinae far apart, partly concealing antennal insertions. Clypeus bicarinate, the anterior border with 2 to 5 teeth. Masticatory border of mandible with 3 to 4 well-defined teeth. Mesoepinotal region of thorax with well-developed suture or impression. Epinotum unarmed. Abdominal pedicel composed of two segments, the petiole and postpetiole. Sting present but not always exerted. Much or most of body smooth and shiny. *Specific characters:* Workers 1.6–5.8 mm. long. Head not extraordinarily large, as with *geminata* (p. 40), distinctly less than twice as broad as pronotum. Mandible not as strongly incurved as that of *geminata*. Masticatory border of man-