

many ways. It builds ugly mounds on lawns; stings painfully, affecting individuals in different ways according to their degree of allergy (a small infant is reported to have been stung to death by the ants); steals seeds from seed beds; kills young or newly hatched poultry, quail, and other birds; girdles nursery stock, such as citrus and pecans; gnaws into the buds of okra and althea, and into potato tubers, dahlia stems, strawberry fruits, and the fruit of egg plants; bites holes in various fabrics such as woolens, silks, linen, and nylon; removes rubber insulation from around telephone wires and fouls telephone equipment with extraneous material; tends honeydew-excreting insects, and feeds on household foods such as nuts, cereals, cookies, butter, grease, meats, and fruits. These ants are especially fond of food with a high protein content.

References: Smith 1936, pp. 120-122; Eckert and Mallis, 1937, pp. 19-21, figs.; Mallis, 1938, pp. 89-91; Eagleson, 1940, p. 700; Smith, 1950, pp. 271-272; Hess, 1958, pp. 58-59; Blum, Roberts, and Novak, 1961, pp. 73-74.

Solenopsis geminata (Fabricius)

Fire ant. A native species which ranges from Texas to South Carolina and Florida and south to at least Costa Rica. It also occurs in the West Indies. The species occurs in most, if not all, of Florida and ranges inland in other States at distances varying up to as much as 150 miles. The species has frequently been confused with *xylini*. The name, "tropical fire ant" seems much more descriptive than that adopted by the Entomological Society of America.

Taxonomic Characters

Subfamily and generic characters: Same as for *xylini*. *Specific characters:* Workers 2.4-6 mm. long. Head extraordinarily enlarged, more than twice as broad as pronotum, strongly bilobed posteriorly. Mandible sharply curved inward or "bowed" (fig. 21, b), the masticatory border frequently toothless. Anterior border of mesopleuron

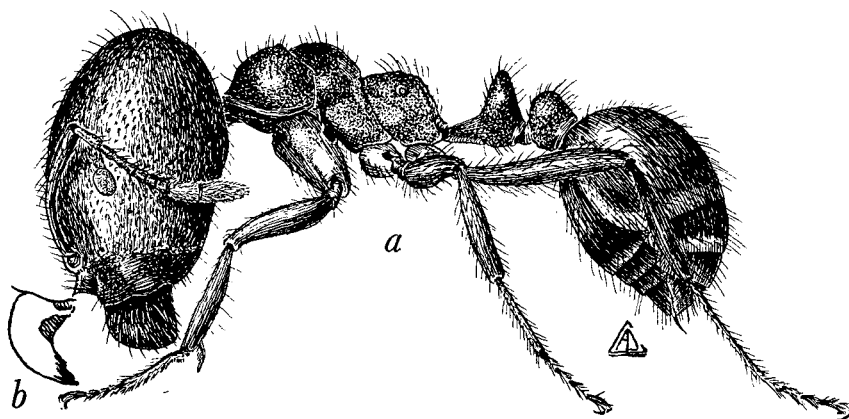


Figure 21.—*Solenopsis geminata* (Fabricius), fire ant: a, Lateral view of worker; b, right mandible showing shape of mandible and the almost toothless condition of the masticatory border.