

Atta texana (Buckley)

Texas leaf-cutting ant, also known by such common local names as night ant, cut ant, parasol ant, pack ant, fungus ant, and red town ant. This native species occurs in eastern Texas and western Louisiana, largely between 92° and 101° long., but it is not necessarily uniformly distributed over this area. Thirteen Louisiana parishes are infested. The species also occurs in northeastern Mexico.

Taxonomic Characters

Subfamily and generic characters: Polymorphic. Antenna 11-segmented, without a well-defined club. Head subcordate, strongly bilobed. Frontal carinae far apart, partly concealing antennal insertions. Dorsum of thorax with three pairs of prominent spines, the anterior ones the largest. Abdominal pedicel composed of 2 segments,

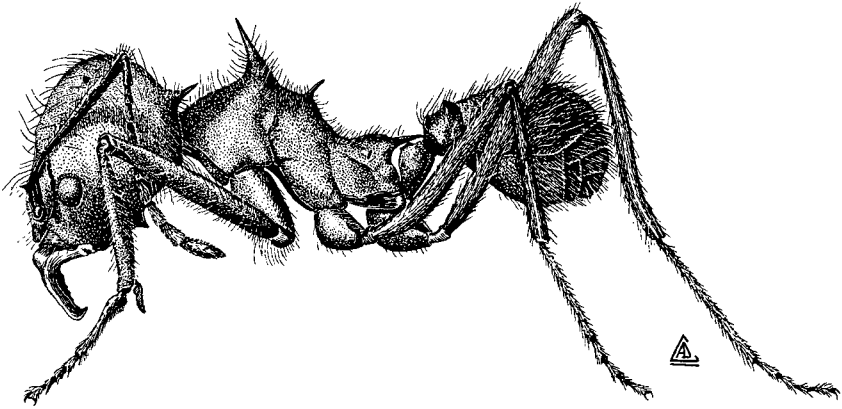


Figure 27.—*Atta texana* (Buckley), Texas leaf-cutting ant, lateral view of worker.

the petiole and postpetiole. Sting present but not always visible. Legs extraordinarily long. *Specific characters:* Workers 1.5–12 mm. long. Anterior border of clypeus with a median emargination, on each side of which there is a tooth. Mandible large, flattened, with a long masticatory border bearing numerous teeth. A spine present at posterior end of each frontal lobe. A longitudinal carina lying between eye and frontal carina and terminating ventrally in a small spine. Each occipital lobe bearing two spines, a large one at posterior corner of head and a smaller one anterior to it. A small spine present on inferior angle of prothorax. Gaster without tubercles. Body densely and minutely punctate. Body usually dull dark brown or rust brown.

Biology and Economic Importance

Nests, found exclusively in the soil, are usually constructed in well-drained sand or loamy soils and commonly on slopes with a southern or western exposure. The central portion of the exterior part of the nest is usually higher than the remainder, and is composed of a differently colored soil. The interior of the nest, which sometimes reaches a depth of 15 to 20 feet, contains innumerable chambers interconnected