

on fences, the ground, and elsewhere. Although common in urban areas and regarded as a city-loving ant, the species has also become well established in rural areas.

The Argentine ant is one of the most persistent and troublesome of all our house-infesting ants. Native ants normally infest houses at random, frequently only in small numbers and for only short periods of time. Argentine ants, on the other hand, will infest every house persistently, continuously, and in large numbers, once they are well established in a given area. Extremely cold weather will cause the ants to enter a period of inactivity or dormancy, but a thaw or an unusually warm period will result in the ants resuming activity. A housekeeper in an infested area can expect to have trouble in her home year after year unless the ants are fought on a community basis. Workers feed on almost every type of food, including sweets, meats, pastries, fruits, dairy products, eggs, animal fats, and vegetable oils. The ants are especially fond of sweets. Although the amount of food eaten may not be large, the housekeeper usually throws the remainder away because of contamination. In addition, the ants make themselves objectionable by crawling on or in every imaginable place such as stoves, refrigerators, shelves, beds, and clothing. The worker ant has no sting. Its bite is rather feeble, and usually occurs only on provocation. The ants also steal seeds from seedbeds, disrupt or destroy bee colonies, drive setting hens from the nest, especially when the eggs are accidentally broken, and kill hatching chicks. Their habit of crawling everywhere, especially over refuse, filth, sputum, faeces, carrion, or sewage, affords them an opportunity to transport the causative organisms of dysentery, typhoid fever, and tuberculosis.

References: Newell, 1908, pp. 20-34; Newell, 1909, pp. 174-192; Newell and Barber, 1913, pp. 1-98, figs.; Smith, 1936, pp. 1-39, fig.; Metcalf and Flint, 1939, pp. 764, 769; Smith, 1950, pp. 285-287; Skaife, 1962, p. 12.

Iridomyrmex pruinosus (Roger)

This native species ranges from Wisconsin to New York, south to New Mexico and Florida, and also occurs in the West Indies. It is not only common, but widely distributed in the southern United States.

Taxonomic Characters

Subfamily and generic characters: Same as for *humilis*. *Specific characters:* Workers 1.8-2.5 mm. long. Head subrectangular. Clypeus broader than long, moderately convex, its anterior border rounded, nonmarginate. Mandible with five to six teeth on masticatory border, these decreasing in size (but not uniformly) from apex to base. Apex of scape distinctly surpassing posterior border of head. Erect hairs rather sparse on body; dorsal surface of thorax with a few erect hairs on pronotum and epinotum, and occasionally on mesonotum (frequently hairs are lacking on one of these regions, especially on mesonotum or epinotum). Body covered with dense grayish or pruinose pubescence which in some lights conceals the ground surface and in other lights fails to do so. Body color highly variable, commonly uniform dark brown or black, or with gaster lighter. Easily dis-