

Tawny (Raspberry) Crazy Ant, *Nylanderia fulva*

The ant recently identified as *Nylanderia fulva* (formerly *Nylanderia* sp. nr. *pubens*) with the new proposed common name Tawny Crazy ant (formerly Raspberry Crazy ant) is an invasive species that has developed into a serious nuisance in the southeastern United States. A rapidly expanding range, explosive localised population growth, and difficulty controlling populations have made this ant a significant pest.

Colonies:

Tawny crazy ants can reach extraordinary population densities. They are social insects that live in large colonies or groups of colonies that seem to be indistinguishable from one another.

Colonies contain many queen ants, worker ants, and brood consisting of larval and pupal stages. Pupae are "naked" or without cocoons. They periodically produce winged male and female forms called swarmers, alates, or reproductives.

The size of infestations can be large and display super colony (unicolonial) behavior

Trailing behavior:

Tawny crazy ant foraging trails are quite apparent (≥ 10 cm wide) and individuals forage erratically.

They prefer shaded areas and avoid unshaded areas.

Foraging trails will often be found going up and down trees, fences, following seams in concrete surfaces, following structural barriers and in large open shady grassy areas.

Nesting and nesting behavior:

Tawny crazy ant colonies can be found under or within almost any object or void, including stumps, soil, concrete, rocks, potted plants, etc. that retain moisture.

Nests primarily occur outdoors, but worker ants will forage indoors, into homes and other structures.



Tawny crazy ant worker (© Mike Quinn, TexasEnto.net, Creative Commons License)

Food and feeding behavior:

Tawny crazy ants eat almost any organic material; they are omnivorous.

Worker ants commonly "tend" sucking hemipterous insects such as aphids, scale insects, whiteflies, mealy bugs, and others that excrete a sugary (carbohydrate) liquid called "honeydew" when stimulated by the ants.

Workers are attracted to sweet parts of plants including nectaries or damaged and over-ripe fruit.

Worker ants also consume other insects and small vertebrates for protein.

Seasonal abundance:

Few worker ants forage during cooler winter months.

During spring, foraging activity begins and colonies grow, producing a very dense worker load that increases in density dramatically by mid-summer.

Ant numbers remain high through autumn.

Biting and medical implications to people, livestock and wildlife:

Tawny crazy ants do not have stingers. In place of a stinger, worker ants possess an acidopore on the end of the gaster (abdomen), which can excrete chemicals for defense or attack. They are capable of biting, and when bitten, they cause a minute pain that quickly fades.

Reporting:

If you think you have seen a Tawny Crazy ant population,

Contact the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline: 1800 084 881.

