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**SURVEY FOR ANTS ON THE ISLAND OF MAUI, HAWAII, WITH  
EMPHASIS ON THE LITTLE FIRE ANT (*WASMANNIA  
AUROPUNCTATA*)**

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Image of *Wasmannia auropunctata* by April Noble (AntWeb)

## ABSTRACT

The little fire ant (LFA), *Wasmannia auropunctata*, is an aggressive pest ant with a painful sting that has spread to many parts of the world through human commerce. In the State of Hawaii, LFA had been intercepted previously as early as 1930, but only recently, in 1999, were established populations found in the Puna District, on the island of Hawaii (Big Island), occupying residential and agricultural sites, such as fruit orchards and plant nurseries. A single population was found on Kauai in 1999, but it has been contained and nearly eradicated. However, on Hawaii island, LFA is now well established in the Puna/Hilo area, with at least 50 sites covering at least several hundred acres. Even though nursery shipments leaving Hilo are checked for LFA by inspectors of the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, it is likely that LFA-infested shipments have reached Maui. This study surveyed portions of the island of Maui for ants, with a main goal of finding populations of LFA. Since much of the nursery material sent from Hawaii to Maui is promptly planted in new developments, searches were focused on newly developed / landscaped areas. During the survey, over 18,000 ants were collected on 4,300 peanut butter baited chopsticks at 360 sites, resulting in 823 locations with 23 ant species but no LFA. The big-headed ant (*Pheidole megacephala*) was by far the most abundant ant encountered in the survey and present at 55% of the sampling sites. However, since not all ant species are equally attracted to the peanut butter bait used in this survey, the relative abundance of ant species encountered may be biased, and 12 species of ants previously recorded for Maui were not collected in the survey.