

# THE GREEN LEAF

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## Stinging ants!

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The Little Fire Ant is an invasive stinging ant that was discovered Dec. 2013 on hapuu (Hawaiian tree fern) at Oahu and Maui garden shops. The state Department of Agriculture is urging the public to report any signs of the Little Fire Ants in their yards. Courtesy photo.

Oahu residents, watch out! **The Oahu Invasive Species Committee** and the **Hawaii Department of Agriculture** is asking the public to help keep an eye out for the **Little Fire Ant**.

This tiny, orange ant is highly invasive and poses a threat to Oahu's economy, environment and quality of life, according to OISC. In case you haven't heard, they were **first detected on Oahu in December 2013** on hapuu logs delivered from the Big Island.

Not to be confused with the tropical fire ant, these ants are smaller, measuring about 1/16th thick (about the width of a penny). Originally from South America, Little Fire Ants like moist, shaded environments and tend to congregate in trees. With a little wind, the ants tend to "rain" down and deliver painful, lingering stings that leave welts. The ants were first detected in Puna in 1999. They pose a threat to Hawaii's agricultural workers as well as to ground, nesting birds and sea turtle hatchlings. They can also be a threat to pets – they have been known to sting pets in their eyes, leading to blindness, according to OISC.

Here is the [New Pest Advisory](#) from the agriculture department.

Reporting any sightings of the Little Fire Ants is critical to preventing the establishment of colonies here. Our columnist, Heidi Bornhorst, [urges everyone to work together to eradicate the little fire ants](#). She offers some treatment tips, as well.

You can test for Little Fire Ants by smearing a thin coat of peanut butter on a chopstick, and place it near new soils, plants, mulch or other landscaping materials in your yard. After 45 minutes, if you find suspected Little Fire Ants on your chopstick, place them in a ziplock bag and freeze for 24 hours to kill them, and call the state Department of Agriculture at **643-PEST**.

A [documentary film on Little Fire Ants](#) by the [Maui Invasive Species Committee](#) premiered in Honolulu on Jan. 13.