

A SURVEY OF PESTIFEROUS ANTS IN SUBURBAN LANDSCAPES OF MAINE AND NEW YORK

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ABSTRACT

Pestiferous ants in the suburban/urban exterior landscape are often overlooked in pest management programs but they can cause considerable problems for homeowners, businesses, and schools. This project aims to identify the most commonly reported species of ants in New York and Maine that cause problems for homeowners, businesses, and schools.

Approximately 500 mailers were distributed in each state to pesticide control operators, extension services, master gardeners, and the general public that have the potential of encountering pestiferous ants. Besides basic collection information, respondents were asked to answer questions about the nature of the complaint and the habitat. Some samples included in this analysis were collected after receiving complaints from the general public.

In Maine we received 90 outdoor pestiferous ant samples representing 15 of 16 Maine counties. Ninety-one percent of the samples originated from privately owned properties and businesses. The majority of the samples (67 percent) originated from coastal counties of Maine. Four genera were represented in the samples. The two most common species found in Maine complaint samples were *Formica*

exsectoides, the Alleghany mountain ant represented in 25 samples, and *Myrmica rubra*, the European fire ant represented in 16 samples.

In New York we received 98 outdoor pestiferous ant samples representing 20 of 62 New York counties. Eighty-eight percent of the samples originated from privately owned properties and businesses. The majority of the samples (49 percent) originated from central New York. Fourteen genera were represented in the samples. The most common pestiferous ant species found in New York were *Tetramorium caespitum* (21 records), *Camponotus pennsylvanicus* (seven records), *Lasius neoniger* and *Tapinoma sessile* (six records each).

The diversity of ants in the samples and the number of complaints was higher in New York, possibly reflecting higher human density and ant diversity. The need for educational materials on species specific ant biology and their true damage potential is evident in the disconnect between sample species and nature of the complaint. Our next step is to develop such materials for the northeast region.