A pictorial key and guide to identifying 21 ant species in North America.

**PETIOLE SINGLE**

- Tip of abdomen ending in a circular opening surrounded by a fringe of hairs
  - Thorax uneven in profile, with obvious bumps and ridges
    - Scape (1st antennal segment) noticeably longer than the height of the head
      - Petiole is a single segment (note the arrow in the figure)
    - Scape (1st antennal segment) not longer or only slightly longer than the height of the head
      - Abdomen opaque or milky white in color, with head and thorax being dark brown to black
      - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
        - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) very small and indistinct, strongly inclined forward and fused to the node, often hidden by abdomen
        - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) distinct but small, erect or sub-erect; never hidden or fused
- Tip of abdomen ending in a slit-like opening, lacking a circular fringe of hairs
  - Thorax uneven in profile, with obvious bumps and ridges
    - Scape (1st antennal segment) noticeably longer than the height of the head
      - Abdomen opaque or milky white in color, with head and thorax being dark brown to black
      - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
        - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) very small and indistinct, strongly inclined forward and fused to the node, often hidden by abdomen
        - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) distinct but small, erect or sub-erect; never hidden or fused
    - Scape (1st antennal segment) not longer or only slightly longer than the height of the head
      - Abdomen uniform in color with head and thorax, brown to black in color
      - Thorax not evenly rounded in profile
        - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) very small and indistinct, strongly inclined forward and fused to the node, often hidden by abdomen
        - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) distinct but small, erect or sub-erect; never hidden or fused
- Thorax evenly rounded and continuous in profile
  - Scape (1st antennal segment) not longer or only slightly longer than the height of the head
    - Abdomen uniform in color with head and thorax, brown to black in color
    - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
      - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) very small and indistinct, strongly inclined forward and fused to the node, often hidden by abdomen
        - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) distinct but small, erect or sub-erect; never hidden or fused
- Thorax uneven in profile, with obvious bumps and ridges
  - Scape (1st antennal segment) not longer or only slightly longer than the height of the head
    - Abdomen uniform in color with head and thorax, brown to black in color
    - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
      - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) very small and indistinct, strongly inclined forward and fused to the node, often hidden by abdomen
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  - Scape (1st antennal segment) noticeably longer than the height of the head
    - Abdomen opaque or milky white in color, with head and thorax being dark brown to black
    - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
      - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) very small and indistinct, strongly inclined forward and fused to the node, often hidden by abdomen
        - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) distinct but small, erect or sub-erect; never hidden or fused
- Thorax not hourglass shaped when viewed from above; legs relatively long compared to body size
  - Thorax hourglass shaped when viewed from above; legs not noticeably long compared to body size
    - Ocelli (simple eyes) not present or noticeable; propodeum (area towards posterior of the thorax on the top side) angular and forming a peak
      - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
        - Abdomen opaque or milky white in color, with head and thorax being dark brown to black
        - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
          - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) very small and indistinct, strongly inclined forward and fused to the node, often hidden by abdomen
            - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) distinct but small, erect or sub-erect; never hidden or fused
      - Thorax not evenly rounded in profile
        - Abdomen uniform in color with head and thorax, brown to black in color
        - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
          - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) very small and indistinct, strongly inclined forward and fused to the node, often hidden by abdomen
            - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) distinct but small, erect or sub-erect; never hidden or fused
    - Ocelli (simple eyes) very noticeable; propodeum (area towards posterior of the thorax on the top side) rounded, never forming a peak
      - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
        - Abdomen opaque or milky white in color, with head and thorax being dark brown to black
        - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
          - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) very small and indistinct, strongly inclined forward and fused to the node, often hidden by abdomen
            - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) distinct but small, erect or sub-erect; never hidden or fused
    - Tarsal segments pale white in color
      - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
        - Abdomen opaque or milky white in color, with head and thorax being dark brown to black
        - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
          - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) very small and indistinct, strongly inclined forward and fused to the node, often hidden by abdomen
            - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) distinct but small, erect or sub-erect; never hidden or fused
  - Ocelli (simple eyes) not present or noticeable; propodeum (area towards posterior of the thorax on the top side) angular and forming a peak
    - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
      - Abdomen opaque or milky white in color, with head and thorax being dark brown to black
      - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
        - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) very small and indistinct, strongly inclined forward and fused to the node, often hidden by abdomen
          - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) distinct but small, erect or sub-erect; never hidden or fused
    - Thorax not evenly rounded in profile
      - Abdomen uniform in color with head and thorax, brown to black in color
      - Thorax evenly rounded in profile
        - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) very small and indistinct, strongly inclined forward and fused to the node, often hidden by abdomen
          - Petiolar scale (flattened, scale-like structure between thorax and the abdomen) distinct but small, erect or sub-erect; never hidden or fused

**Common Pest Species of Ants**

- **Carpenter**
- **Crazy**
- **False Honey**
- **Citronella**
- **Cornfield**
- **Allegheny**
- **White Footed**
- **Vellety Tree**
- **Argentine Ant**

Photo: Joseph Berger, Bugwood.org
Thorax with one or more pairs of spines
Thorax lacking distinct spines (unarmed)

Thorax with 3 pairs of spines
Thorax with only one pair of spines

Pedicel attached to the top of the abdomen
Pedicel attached to the front of the abdomen, never the top

LEAF CUTTER
THIEF

Fire Ant

Antennae composed of 10 segments, with the last 2 forming a distinct club
Antennae composed of 12 segments, with the last 3 forming a distinct club

Smaller species, less than 2 mm (0.08 inches) long
Larger species, greater than 3.0 mm (0.12 inches) long

Species dark brownish-black to black in color
Species lighter in color, reddish-yellow to yellow

Head without bristles
Head and thorax covered in distinct ridges, giving a striped appearance; all individuals with proportionally sized heads
Head and thorax lacking ridges, not striped in appearance, some individuals with noticeably large heads

ACROBAT
HARVESTER

PAVEMENT
BIG HEADED

PHARAOH
LITTLE BLACK
FIRE
THIEF

Leaf Cutter Ant
Photo: R. Scott Cameron, Advanced Forest Protection, Inc., Bugwood.org

Pavement Ant
Photo: Joseph Berger, Bugwood.org