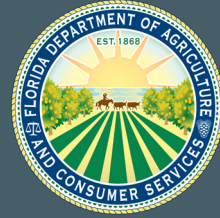
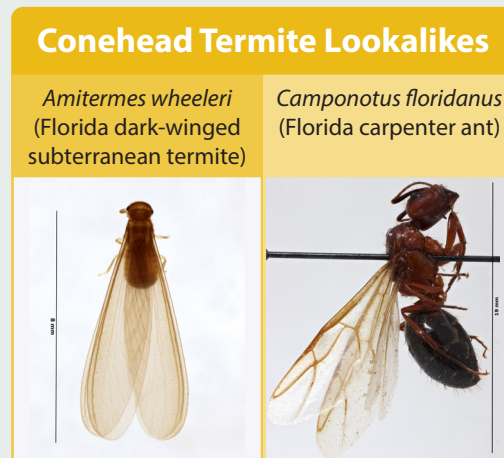
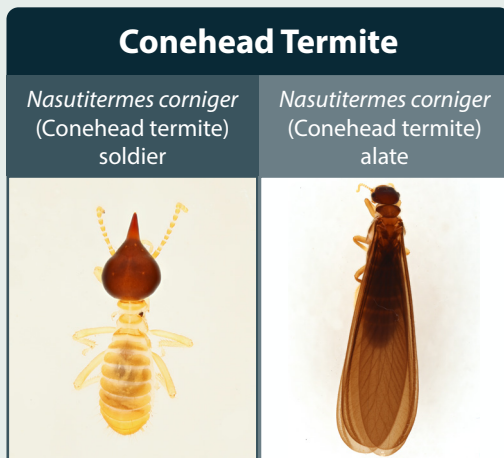


DIFFERENTIATING FLORIDA SPECIES FROM THE INVASIVE CONEHEAD TERMITE: AN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE



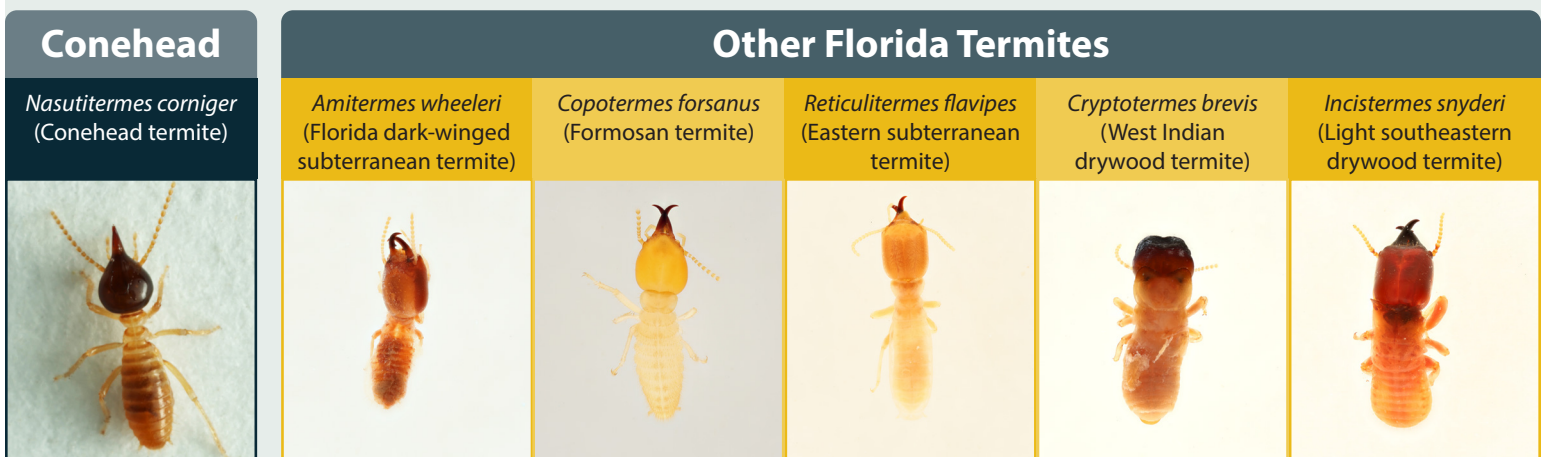
DIVISION
of
PLANT INDUSTRY



While the word termite is commonly associated with destruction of structural wood and timber, only 100 species are considered serious pests of concern out of 3,000 species worldwide. Termites are social insects that divide labor between distinct castes within a colony. While termites may be confused with ants at first glance, termites possess straight antennae, front wings and hind wings with the same length that can be up to twice the length of their body.

At least three families of termites can be found in Florida: Kalotermitidae (wood-dwelling termites), Rhinotermitidae (subterranean termites) and Termitidae – which includes arboreal termites such as the invasive conehead termite. Kalotermitidae build their nests within wood while Rhinotermitidae construct underground nests and build foraging tunnels to access food sources. On the other hand, the invasive *Nasutitermes corniger*, conehead termite, constructs arboreal nests with foraging tunnels connected to the ground.

Termites are the only major group of social animals in which all the species have morphologically distinct reproductives (alates) and soldiers while workers lack variation. While conehead termite soldiers are easily distinguishable due to their unique head shape and body and wing length, wing coloration of conehead alates can be mistaken for *Amitermes wheeleri*, a native subterranean termite species.



(images not to scale)

[FDACS.gov/coneheadtermite](https://fdacs.gov/coneheadtermite)

DPI Helpline: 1-888-397-1517

Soldiers

<i>Nasutitermes corniger</i> (Conehead termite)	<i>Amitermes wheeleri</i> (Florida dark-winged subterranean termite)	<i>Copotermes forsanus</i> (Formosan termite)	<i>Reticulitermes flavipes</i> (Eastern subterranean termite)	<i>Cryptotermes brevis</i> (West Indian drywood termite)	<i>Incisitermes snyderi</i> (Light southeastern drywood termite)
					

Conehead termite soldiers are the only species in Florida with a cone-shaped protrusion on their head, which they use to secrete a sap-like chemical to deter predators. Compared to other species in Florida, their mandibles are reduced to points.

Alates

<i>Nasutitermes corniger</i> (Conehead termite)	<i>Amitermes wheeleri</i> (Florida dark-winged subterranean termite)	<i>Copotermes forsanus</i> (Formosan termite)	<i>Reticulitermes flavipes</i> (Eastern subterranean termite)	<i>Cryptotermes brevis</i> (West Indian drywood termite)	<i>Incisitermes snyderi</i> (Light southeastern drywood termite)
					

Conehead alates possess dark brown to black wings and a body length of 15-18mm including the wings. Other Florida dark-winged termites are less than 10mm long and have an abundance of small veins throughout their wings.

Signs of Activity



Conehead nests

Conehead nest tunnels

Conehead termite nests can vary in size, ranging from the size of a baseball to a beachball. Conehead termites have adapted to living above ground, and their nests are often found in trees or attached to structures, although they can also be located at ground level.