

Beware the Spotted Lanternfly: Beautiful, deadly, and dangerous!

The spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) has only been in the United States since 2014, but it's causing real havoc in eastern states. This plant hopper costs the state of Pennsylvania an estimated \$324 million a year in crop damage! Although live insects have yet to be identified in Michigan, their tendency to lay egg in vehicles and freight bound for interstate travel may mean it's only a matter of time before they are. That's why the Michigan Department of Natural Resources classified the spotted lanternfly a "watch list species" with the potential to cause real problems for Michigan's economy, environment, and public health.



Where did it come from?

Spotted lanternfly is native to Southeast Asia. It is believed to have come to America on the exotic tree-of-heaven plant. The tree-of-heaven, which was originally imported into the U.S. as an ornamental and erosion control species, is a common invasive in much of the Eastern U.S. and a preferred host to the spotted lantern fly. Lanternfly egg masses were likely hitchhiked into the United States on imported tree-of-heaven. Since their introduction, spotted lanternfly have been identified in at least 12 counties in Pennsylvania, and individuals have been found in Delaware, Virginia, New Jersey, Maryland, Ohio and New York.

Why is it dangerous?

Although it prefers tree-of-heaven, spotted lanternfly is known to feed on as many as 70 species of plants including fruit trees, grapevines, and several hardwoods. High densities of this insect can reduce the vigor of, and even kill, host plants. As sap feeders, spotted lanternflies pierce the bark of their host plants to feed, creating a wound that allows plant pathogens to infect the tree. They also excrete large amounts of honeydew while feeding, attracting other pests, such as hornets wasps and ants, that may continue to harm the tree. This build up of waste also allows sooty mold and fungi to grow on the trees, which can inhibit plant growth and cause death.

How does it spread?

The most common way spotted lanternflies spread is through accidental transport of eggs and egg sacs. Females are poor fliers, but their eggs can travel long distances on truck beds, rail cars, and freight material. Eggs masses can attach to nearly any surface, including vehicles, outdoor equipment, or lumber. Unnoticed egg masses can be moved by accident as part of freight transport or normal interstate travel.



What can I do?

Slowing the spread of spotted lanternfly is important to minimizing their impact. If you are in an area where spotted lanternfly is present, check vehicles and outdoor equipment for egg masses by following [this checklist](#) from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. Do not move nursery trees, firewood or mulch out of quarantined areas.

A common treatment in Pennsylvania involves wrapping tree trunks in plastic wrap coated with sticky substances to capture feeding nymphs. Surround the sticky wrap in wire or mesh to prevent birds or small mammals from sticking to the tree.

Removing seeding trees-of-heaven from the area also appears to reduce populations abundance. Another solution involves treating so called non-seed producing "trap trees" with systemic insecticide to kill the feeding nymphs and adults. Consult a certified pesticide applicator or MDARD official before pursuing this course of action.

In Michigan, where live spotted lanternfly have not yet been identified, it is important to identify and report these insects as soon as possible. Take as many pictures as you can, record the location and, if possible, try to collect the specimen. If you see egg masses or other signs of infections on trees, **do not disturb them.**

Note the location, and report your findings to: Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, MDA-Info@michigan.gov or phone the MDARD Customer Service Center, 800-292-3939, or record your finding on the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network [online reporting tool](#).