



TOWNSHIPS TODAY

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State Warns Public to Be on Look Out for Spotted Lanternfly

Here we go again. First, it was the emerald ash borer that marched relentlessly from west to east across the commonwealth, leaving a trail of decimated ash trees in its wake. Now, the spotted lanternfly is threatening to spread from southeastern Pennsylvania and could wreak even more havoc than the ash borer.

According to the state Department of Agriculture, the pest poses a significant threat to the grape, apple, and stone fruit industries, worth nearly \$175 million, as well as the state's \$12 billion hardwood industry.

Consequently, the U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded the state nearly \$3 million last summer to fund control efforts and public outreach. With 13 southeastern counties under quarantine, state legislators have requested an additional \$20 to \$40 million in federal funding to combat the insect.

Municipalities in the quarantined counties (*see the map*) have been asked to alert residents and post signs and information about how to recognize the spotted lanternfly. The goal is to minimize the risk of the insect leaving the quarantined area.

Given that insects don't recognize quarantines, it is a good idea to get educated about this invasive species and watch for its arrival in your community.



Despite its colorful appearance, the spotted lanternfly poses a significant threat to Pennsylvania's grape and stone fruit crops, as well as its multibillion-dollar hardwoods industry.

How to identify the pest

The spotted lanternfly, *Lycorma delicatula*, is an invasive plant hopper native to China, India, and Vietnam.

The insect was first detected in Pennsylvania in Berks County in the fall of 2014 and spread to Bucks, Chester, Lehigh, Montgomery, and Northampton counties. To try to control its spread,

the state extended the quarantine area to include Carbon, Delaware, Lancaster, Lebanon, Monroe, Philadelphia, and Schuylkill counties. The bug has also been seen in Delaware, New York, and Virginia.

The state Department of Agriculture says that adult lanternflies are about an inch long and a half-inch wide at rest. The lanternfly's forewing is gray with black spots, and the wingtips have a net-like appearance in black and gray. The hind wings have contrasting patches of red and black with a white band between them. The legs and head are black, and the abdomen is yellow with broad black bands. Immature stages, called nymphs, are first black with white spots and then develop red patches as they grow.

Lanternflies prefer the plant called Tree of Heaven, *Ailanthus altissima* — another invasive species in Pennsylvania — as their primary food source and mating and egg-laying location. (To learn how to identify Tree of Heaven, go to www.agriculture.pa.gov/spottedlanternfly, click on the "Program Information" box, and choose "Ailanthus Identification" in the list of publications on the right.)

However, any smooth surface, from trees to vehicles, campers, yard furniture, farm equipment, and other items stored outside can act as sites for egg laying. Adult lanternflies begin laying eggs in late September and continue through late November or early December.

The warning signs

Beginning in late April to mid-May, nymphs may be found on smaller plants and vines and any new growth on trees and shrubs. As the year progresses, older nymphs and adults will migrate to the Tree of Heaven, if available, and may be observed feeding on the trunk and branches.

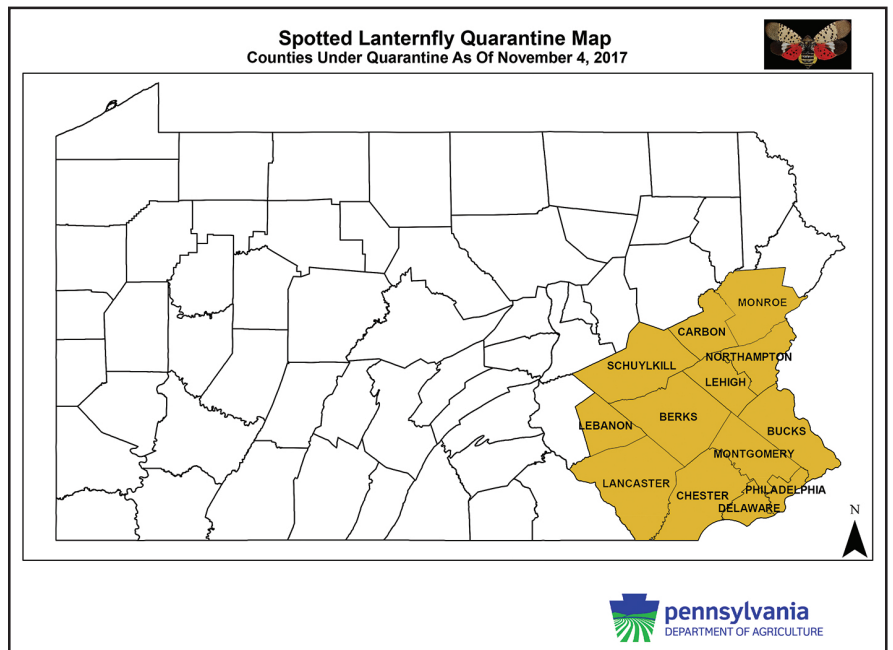
Trees may have weeping wounds of sap on the trunks, and heavy lanternfly populations will cause honey-like secretions to build up at the base of the tree, blackening it and the surrounding soil with sooty mold. Wasps, hornets, bees, and ants may be attracted to the secretions and tree wounds.

In areas with large populations of lanternflies, adults may also feed on other trees, including willows, maples, poplars, tulip poplars, birch, and ash.

The Department of Agriculture says that egg masses can be scraped off the trees, double bagged, and disposed of. You can also drop the egg masses into alcohol or hand sanitizer to kill them.

The department is asking anyone who sees spotted lanternflies, especially outside the quarantined counties, to do the following:

- Collect a specimen and submit it to the department's entomology lab for verification, using the entomology program sample submission form at www.agriculture.pa.gov/spottedlanternfly.
- Take a picture of any life stage of the spotted lanternfly, including egg masses, and email it to



Thirteen southeastern Pennsylvania counties are under quarantine for the spotted lanternfly. The public in affected areas is asked to dispose of egg masses; check vehicles for insects and egg masses before leaving a quarantined area; buy firewood locally and not move it out of the area; and not transport brush, yard waste, or construction waste outside quarantined areas.

badbug@pa.gov.

- If you can't collect a specimen or take a photo, report a sighting by calling the automated invasive species report line toll-free at (866) 253-7189. Leave a message, making sure to include details about where you saw it and your contact information.

What to do

Anyone who observes spotted lanternflies beyond the quarantined counties should try to destroy them.

Because insecticides may kill beneficial insects, including pollinators, on infected trees, property owners should consider using the integrated pest management strategy that the state is using. It involves locating Tree of Heaven plants, killing all but a few to act as "trap trees" to attract the lanternflies, and then treating those with a systemic insecticide to eradicate the pests.

As an added step, Gov. Tom Wolf has created the Pennsylvania Invasive Species Council. This advisory panel of 17 state and non-governmental agencies will identify invasive species that currently or could threaten the state's natural and agricultural resources and the industries they support.

To learn more about these pests, go to the Department of Agriculture's website, www.agriculture.pa.gov/spottedlanternfly, and check out information available from the Penn State Extension at <https://extension.psu.edu/shopby/spotted-lanternfly>.