

## Spotted Lanternfly – Our Newest Invasive Pest!

by Jackie Algon

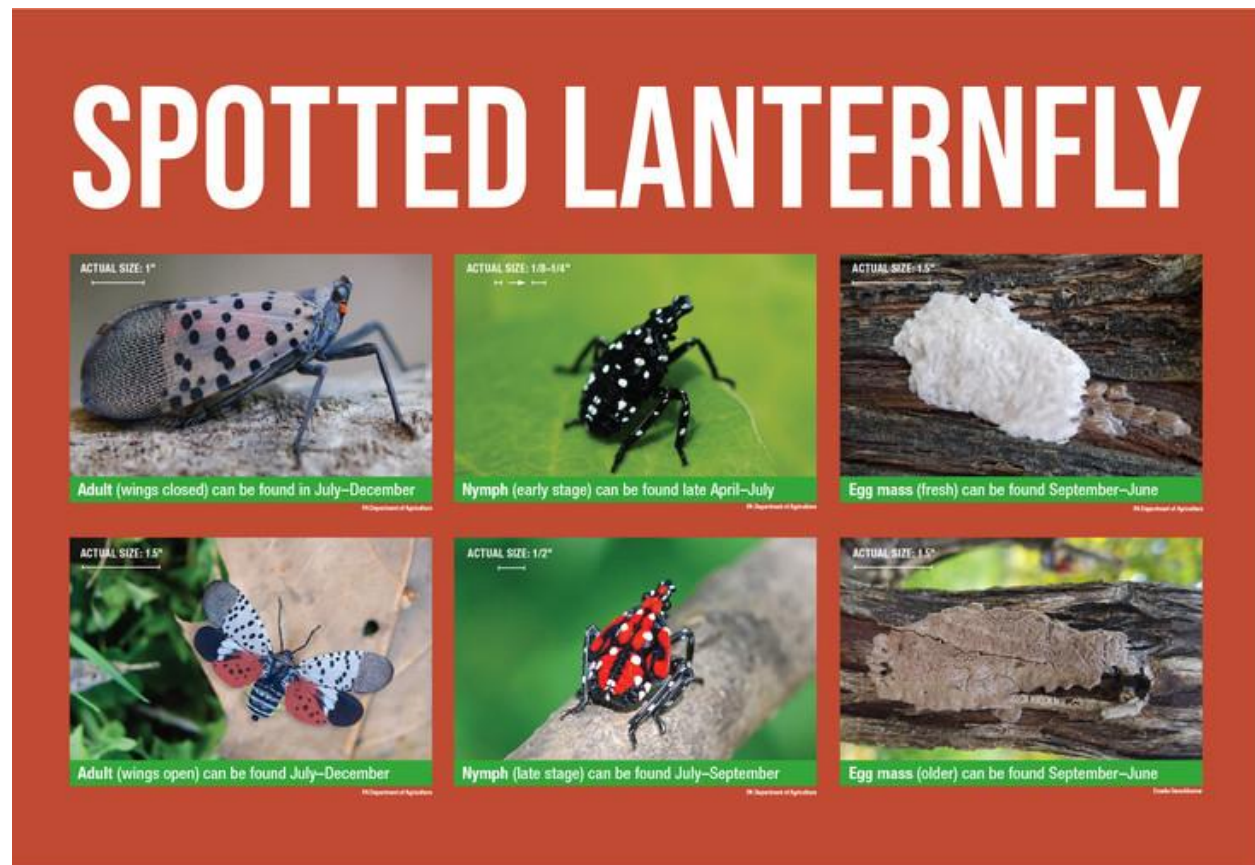


IMAGE: Penn State

An invasive insect that probably was brought in as egg masses on packing materials from China and Southeast Asia is a plant hopper called Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) (*Lycorma delicatula*). To date, this insect has made its way from Philadelphia throughout eastern Pennsylvania and into New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia. Its spread has been so serious that Pennsylvania has instituted restrictions on travel into and out of specific counties to help prevent its expansion.

Plant hoppers feed by using their piercing sucking mouthparts to extract fluids from plants, and as they do, the plants release a sticky, liquid substance called honeydew, which attracts ants, bees, wasps and other insects. The honeydew often drips onto foliage below forming a substance called sooty mold, which appears black. Both the immature stages of SLF, called nymphs, and the adults feed in this manner.

Although SLF makes use of more than 70 different plant species including important forest and food crops, its preferred food is the Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), a rapid-growing invasive tree that originated in China. Tree of Heaven can easily be confused with our native sumac or eastern walnut. To learn how to distinguish them [take a look at this short video](#).

Because SLF is a prolific reproducer and feeder, it impacts the economy of the areas where infestations are rampant. In addition, it interferes with outdoor recreation on private and public properties, though it has not been known to sting or bite humans or animals.

While these insects are specific as to their food sources, they are not specific about where they lay their eggs, including under bark of trees, but also on lawn furniture, on cars and trucks, thus accounting for the fast introduction of them across so many states. The insects remain in the egg state throughout winter and become nymphs in spring, appearing as gray with large white spots. By the time they reach their fourth stage, they take on the coloring indicated in the photo, with a bright red color and small white spots on their back and white spots on their black legs.

Treatment to-date has been the removal of their host plant, Tree of Heaven, leaving a few to serve as 'trap plants' treated with insecticide to kill the SLF when they ingest the tree sap. Property owners can scrape the egg masses in fall and winter and can band affected trees with sticky tape to prevent nymphs from climbing the trees to feed.

So far only one SLF has been identified in Connecticut. Anyone seeing either the adults, nymphs or egg masses should immediately notify the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, or the State Department of Agriculture. For more information, including how to report any CT sightings, visit CT DEEP's [dedicated page](#).

On August 14th, New York State confirmed that the first Spotted Lanternfly in the state was discovered on Staten Island. The State is urging New Yorkers to report any sightings. Use [this link](#) for more information and to access the reporting tool.