

Spotted Lanternfly Has Arrived in Harrisburg-- What You Can Do This Winter

December 2020

Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) is an invasive insect native to Asia that was first discovered a few years ago in southeast PA. It has now made its way as far west as Harrisburg, and we are all likely to encounter them next summer. Keep an eye out now, though, for SLF egg masses overwintering on the undersides of branches, or on protected surfaces of decks, outdoor furniture, or any other stationary object on your property. The egg masses are one to two inches long, dark gray and look like putty. Destroying egg masses now can reduce the number of insects on your property next summer, but to do so you must scrape them into a jar of alcohol or hand sanitizer. Allowing them to scatter will not help as the eggs will still hatch.

Spotted lanternflies feed voraciously on the sap of many plants, including a variety of trees. While they won't kill a tree outright, in large numbers they stress the tree and become a real nuisance to people. As they feed, they secrete a sticky substance called honeydew, which then attracts the growth of black sooty mold. A heavy insect infestation can result in sooty mold completely covering plant parts, as well as decks, awnings, or other objects beneath the tree.

The preferred food of the Spotted Lanternfly is Tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), which is itself also invasive and difficult to control, but maples, oaks, and sycamores are also desirable. In an effort to reduce the impact of SLF on city parks, this winter staff will be locating tree-of-heaven in parks throughout the city and treating as many as possible with chemicals in the summer. Most will receive a systemic herbicide to kill them, thereby reducing the food supply for SFL. A smaller number will be retained as "trap trees." Trap trees will be treated with a systemic pesticide which will kill SLF insects as they feed on the foliage of the tree.

For homeowners, a sticky band of flypaper attached tightly to a tree trunk is an effective means of capturing and killing young spotted lanternfly nymphs, as they habitually climb up the trunk of a tree to feed. Screen or fine wire mesh must be attached over the sticky band, however, to protect other insects, birds, and small mammals from also being captured. A wealth of information, including excellent photos and how-to videos, is available through Penn State Extension at <https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly-management-for-residents> and <https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly-frequently-asked-questions> .