

The Spotted Lanternfly is Here. Now What?

June 2021

What is it?

Spotted lanternfly (SLF) is an invasive insect pest that was first found in Berks County in 2014 and has now made its way to the Harrisburg area. With piercing/ sucking mouthparts, it feeds on the sap of a wide variety of trees and woody plants. Its favorite food is ailanthus or “tree of heaven,” an invasive non-native tree species. But other preferred species include walnut, silver maple, red maple, willow, Londonplane, tulip poplar, some oaks, sumac, grapevine, and oriental bittersweet. While SLF generally does not kill established trees outright, it can kill young trees and suppress the growth of heavily infested larger trees. The insects do not bite or hurt people or pets, but do create a significant nuisance in outdoor living spaces.

The eggs hatch in late April and early May and the insects go through four developmental stages as nymphs before becoming adults. The first three stages of nymphs are black with bright white spots, about 1/8- 1/2 inch long. The fourth stage nymph is red with white and black spots. The adult is a leafhopper with grey wings with black spots, and a bright red under wing.

At the present stage they are not yet causing much of a problem, but as they grow to adulthood, they secrete a sticky substance called “honeydew” as they feed. This substance can cover leaves as well as anything beneath the tree— including outdoor furniture, awnings, decks, toys, whatever. A black sooty mold is attracted to the honeydew and can cover any surface where honeydew falls

What you can do

If you are seeing spotted lanternfly nymphs on trees near you, two types of traps can be effective in capturing them before they mature: sticky bands and circle traps. The insects habitually fall from the trees and climb back up the trunks to feed. Both traps capture them as they climb upward. Sticky bands are simply made of flypaper wrapped tightly around the tree trunk, with nylon window screening tacked loosely in place over the band to protect non-target insects, birds, and small mammals from also being caught. Circle traps are essentially upside down funnels made of window screening and wrapped tightly around the trunk. As the insects climb upward into the funnel, they are directed into a plastic bag from which they can't escape.

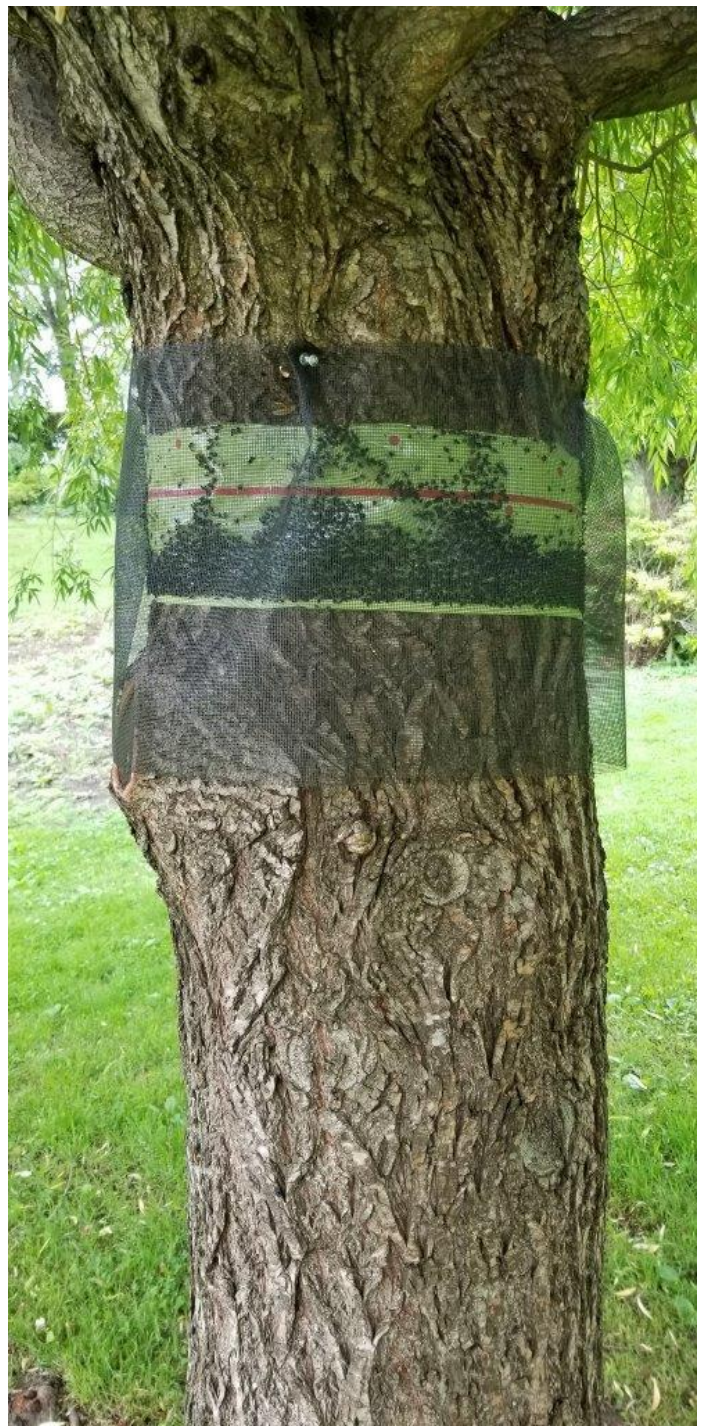
The Parks and Facilities Department will be offering circle traps to residents free of charge. Anyone needing one can pick one up at 123 Walnut Street, Suite 317 between 8:00 and 4:30 Monday - Friday.

Beginning in July as the adults emerge, another option is to treat a tree heavily infested with SLF with a systemic insecticide to kill the insects as they feed. “Ortho Tree and Shrub Insect Control Granules” is a product available to homeowners which, when applied as directed on the label, is effective in killing SLF.

Penn State Extension offers excellent written material and instructional videos about spotted lanternfly on their website <https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly-frequently-asked-questions> and <https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly-management-resources> .



A Circle Trap on a red maple tree 6/4/21



A Sticky Band Trap on a red maple tree 6/4/21. Protective screening over sticky band is to prevent unintended capture of other insects, as well as birds and small mammals.



Captured SLF nymphs on sticky band 6/4/21. This trap is effective in the nymph stages.



SLF nymphs on black walnut twig 6/17/21