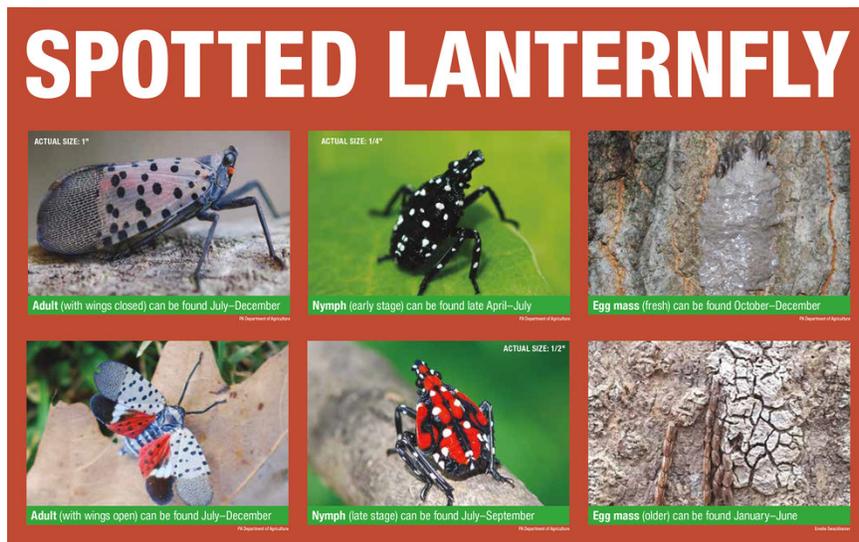


Spotted Lanternfly



The newest concern in our area is the Spotted lanternfly, an invasive insect native to southeast Asia that was first detected in Berks county, PA in 2014, but now is spreading quickly. Although the name suggests it is a fly, it is really a planthopper. The adult lanternfly can hop a long way, especially when jumping from high in a tree. But the primary way it moves long distances is by effectively “hitchhiking” in every part of its life cycle, from eggs to adults, attaching itself to vehicles, trains and other forms of transport. Egg masses are putty-colored and hard to detect, and can be found on almost any flat surface. Consequently, the lanternfly has been carried many miles beyond the quarantine zones in PA, DE, MD and NJ, and has the potential to turn up in almost every state in the country.

The SLF has been reported to attack over 70 species of plants, but its preferred host is *Ailanthus altissima*, or Tree of Heaven, which is also an invasive species from Asia. The lanternfly is adaptable, and will attack other hosts in the absence of *Ailanthus*.

It sucks the sap from plants, potentially weakening them. The SLF does not appear to actually kill many plant species. Plants at greatest risk appear to be grapes and hops, due to this pest’s feeding behavior. It does not bite people, nor does it try to come into your house.

It’s an inefficient feeder, meaning it sucks large amounts of sap and excretes a lot as well. This excreted material, called “honeydew”, is sugary and sticky, and whatever it lands on tends to turn black from colonization by a fungus called black sooty mold, which in turn can attract stinging insects, and generally make outdoor activities for people unpleasant.

The lanternfly is relatively easy to kill with pesticides, but the risk is that non-target insects, including beneficial predators of the SLF, are also killed. Scraping egg masses can kill some, as can sticky bands (which can also catch non-target organisms). The best hope for control is a naturally occurring fungus, which is being investigated for its practical application.