

Spotted Lanternfly Threatens Forest and Crops

Michigan has another invasive insect looming on the horizon, and recently a dead bug has been found in the state that shows we need to prepare for its arrival. *Lycorma delicatula*, known commonly as Spotted Lanternfly, is a plant-hopper that is native to India, Vietnam and Southwestern China. The pest first appeared in the United States in Pennsylvania, and has since spread to nine other states. Last November, a dead Spotted Lanternfly was found in Southern Michigan. This sap-feeding insect poses a large risk to crops like grapes and hops, as well as to tree species in our forests. The risk to our forests is similar to *Lymantria dispar*, formerly known as "Gypsy Moth", with massive outbreaks of the pest affecting the health of trees at a landscape scale.

Knowing what to look for is the first step in driving back this pest. The beginning of this insect's life cycle starts as a mass of eggs, usually covered in a gray substance that is similar to mud or cement. These egg masses can be laid on almost any surface, from trees to rocks, and buildings to vehicles. This makes it very easy to accidentally transport them to new areas, and the inch long blotch of eggs can often go unnoticed. Once the eggs hatch in early April to May, the young nymphs will begin to feed on the sap of any nearby woody plants. It is currently estimated that the young Lanternflies can feed on up to 70 different species of trees. It is known to prefer Tree of Heaven, which is native to its home region, but is a tree introduced as an ornamental plant that has since spread into forests across the state. No trees have been killed by infestation of Spotted Lanternfly yet, but increased populations may cause long-term harm. A concerning amount of economic harm could be caused by infestations from forests to nearby orchards and vineyards, with the insects causing reduced health of fruit trees, grapes, and hops, which would reduce the yield of these crops.

So what can be done about this pest? As with many situations, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Being alert around our forests and homes can help prevent the spread if and when it arrives in Michigan. There are some simple things one can do to help prevent the insect from moving in, one of the most important being to never move firewood. Always use locally sourced wood for campfires, and to check the logs for any signs of strange insects. Another easy and fun thing to do is to walk through your woods! While enjoying the beauty of Michigan's forests, you can check on the health of trees and watch for the signs of this invasive species. The most likely sign of Spotted Lanternfly in your woods will be their egg masses, which will be laid on almost any flat surface and will look like irregular gray blotches. The adult insects themselves are also quite large and colorful, about an inch long, with red hind-wings and a yellow abdomen. The sooner these insects can be found, the easier it is to get rid of them. If you see any of these signs, please contact your local Department of Natural Resources office.

If you have woods of your own, managing your forests to be resilient to invasive species can also be done. This can range from removing Tree of Heaven, to increasing biodiversity to promote long-term forest health. If you are not sure where to start, or what could be done in your woods, your local Conservation District can help! The Barry, Allegan, and Ottawa Conservation District has a forester on staff which can provide professional assistance and referrals to programs which may help you manage your land. You can contact District Forester Ben Savoie at 269-908-4134 or at ben.savoie@macd.org to set up an On-Site Assessment at no cost to you.



FY2021 By the Numbers

Site Visits - 98

Visit Acreage - 2640

Private Sector Referrals - 78

Public Sector Referrals - 60

Media Occurrences - 50

Outreach Events - 3

QFP Verifications - 6

QFP Acreage - 317

Open Referrals:

None available at this time, keep watch for new requests at the Barry CD website or stay tuned for more requests via email.

As always, thank you for all the work you do!

