

Amyntus Part II - Update on Jumping Worms

by Lyn Chimera

Amyntas worms are problematic because they damage the soil, but their effects are far wider.

1. They change the soil structure by consuming the "duff" layer which prohibits natural decomposition and replenishing of soil microorganisms.

2. Their castings effect the nutrient levels and NPK which effects the growth of plants.

3. These soil changes alter the natural soil food web.

4. It also changes habitat for vertebrates and ground nesting birds.

5. Without the natural duff there is no habitat for the many insects and invertebrates which rely on that habitat.

6. The many tree and plant seeds that need the duff to germinate will be suppressed. So these worms are a huge threat to forest ecology. (They showed photos of forests with and without Amyntas and it was amazing. The forest floor with the worms was devoid of almost all vegetation and what was left was browsed by deer!)

7. Eventually plant communities change with the altered environment.

8. Amyntas also harm the natural fungal life underground. They devour the hyphae of the mycorrhizae fungus which help support plant growth.

9. The castings Amyntas leave behind do not bind together and remain rather crumbly which increases soil erosion and effects water runoff.

10. The one good result of all of this is that the tick population decreases.

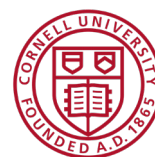
Some of the reasons these worms have spread so widely is they out reproduce the typical European worms in most gardens. They are less nutritious than

other worms so are not eaten by many birds or other predators. Hurricane Sandy is also thought to be a contributing factor for their spread as so much mulch was moved around from place to place. In addition, they are spread as fishing bait. These worms can swim!

While alcohol plus water will kill the worms that you hand pick, it is not recommended that you douse your soil with the solution. It will kill other life in the soil.

Using a mustard slurry doesn't kill the worms. It just irritates them which may bring them to the surface for easier hand picking. Since they live in the top 2 inches of soil, gently disturbing the soil with a hand prong cultivation tool will do the same thing. An important warning was to not feed Amyntas worms to chickens as the worms may have toxic metals in their system.

Their tails can break off when they are disturbed. This is a natural defense mechanism and does not kill the worm. If you want to kill it, you have to cut it very close to or in front of the clitellum, though it is much easier to drop them in the alcohol solution.



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