

Update on Jumping Worms

by Lyn Chimera

The “What’s Bugging You First Friday” talk recently was about jumping worms. Kyle Wickings, professor of Soil Arthropod Ecology and Turfgrass Entomology, gave an overview and update on this pervasive invasive.

Jumping worms originated in Korea and Japan. There are 16 species in North America, 3 in the northeast US. Worms seen in the early spring are probably not jumping worms. Adults don’t survive the winter and the young need consistent above 50 degree temperatures to hatch. This spring is iffy as there were warm days before this cold spell hit. The problem in identifying the young jumping worms is they don’t show the telltale cream colored clitellum (band near the head of the worm) until they have reached sexual maturity. One way you can differential a young jumping worm is they will thrash or wiggle wildly.

The problem is what they do to the soil. Their castings produce ground that looks like coffee grounds, very granular and dark. The castings are high in nitrogen and with severe infestations the nitrogen in the soil can become high enough to affect plant growth. This miner-alizes the soil to the point that plants can’t absorb nutrients properly.

So far there are no products to control the jumping worm. The DEC has categorized it as a nuisance species. This means infected compost, topsoil, and mulch can’t be sold or transported. Carefully inspect any compost, mulch or topsoil you buy. Jumping worms can even be

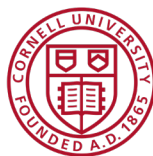
in bagged products. Heating infected product to 104 – 130 degrees Fahr-enheit for 3 days will kill the worms.

To tell if you have eggs in your soil or compost wash some soil through a sieve with a small enough mesh to capture the ¼ inch eggs. The soil will wash through leaving the eggs. A mixture of 1/3 cup dry mustard with 1 gallon water poured over the ground will bring the jumping worms to the surface for ID and easy picking.

Jumping worms will be found near the top of soil, living right below mulch, leaf litter or plant material. If you find any drop them in a con-tainer with alcohol and water which will kill them.

For more information go to:

- <https://extension.psu.edu/look-out-for-jumping-earthworms>
- <https://ulster.cce.cornell.edu/environment/invasive-pests/jumping-worm>
- If you’re interested in the First Friday Zooms go to : <https://cals.cornell.edu/integrated-pest-management/outreach-education/events/whats-bugging-you-webinars>



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