

Spotted Lanternfly FAQs



Figure 1 *ycorma delicatula* life stages, published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Entomological Society of America 2021. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spotted_lanternfly_Life_Cycle.jpg

- What is spotted lanternfly?
 - Spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) is a non-native invasive leaf-hopper insect that feeds on the sap of various plant species. Since they were first found in Pennsylvania in 2014, their population has grown extremely quickly, with very large numbers of the insect occurring in some areas. The first spotted lanternfly in Maryland was found in 2018.
- Where is spotted lanternfly from?
 - They are native to east Asia, which has a similar climate to the Mid-Atlantic region. Tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) is one of their preferred plant host species, and is a widespread non-native invasive tree in our region.



Figure 2 Tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) image by Luis Fernández García,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ailanthus-altissima.jpg>

- Why is spotted lanternfly a concern?
 - Spotted lanternflies feed on a wide range of plant species, stressing and occasionally killing plants. They are primarily an agricultural pest that can cause significant damage to grape vines, fruit trees, and hardwoods, reducing crop yields. In the urban landscape, they rarely kill trees; however, they excrete a sugary substance called honeydew that can attract bees, ants, or wasps. The honeydew can lead to unsightly sooty mold. In large quantities, sooty mold can be harmful for plants.
- How is spotted lanternfly spreading so fast?
 - Spotted lanternfly numbers can increase significantly year over year, with each female capable of laying an egg mass containing 30-50 eggs. Many of these egg masses are deposited on vehicles or materials that are then moved to a new location where the eggs hatch into spotted lanternfly the following year. Adult spotted lanternflies will also often “hitchhike” on vehicles and travel to new places.



Figure 3 Photo of spotted lanternfly on vehicle by Lance Cheung, USDA APHIS

- How do I identify spotted lanternfly? Are there beneficial insects that look like them?
 - Adult spotted lanternflies are about 1" long and 1" wide, with tan upper wings with spots, and prominent bright red lower wings with black spots and black and white bands that are most visible during flight. There are native beneficial insects that look similar to spotted lanternfly, including tiger moths. Native insects, including tiger moths, provide many benefits to native ecosystems and wildlife, so it is important to be sure of the insect's identification before killing it. Photos of spotted lanternflies can be found at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/plant_health/fs-slf-lookalikes.508.pdf
- When does spotted lanternfly emerge from its egg mass? When are the adults most prevalent?
 - The spotted lanternfly emerges as a nymph in early May and changes appearance as it grows into a flying insect. In Maryland, the spotted lanternfly matures to its adult appearance as early as July, and remains active until the first following hard frost, typically in November.
- Where can I report spotted lanternfly sightings?
 - You can provide an observation with a photo online to the Maryland Department of Agriculture at <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/26f9dbec58674313b1bec03ddb8b5f0e>
- Is spotted lanternfly dangerous to people or pets?
 - No – they do not bite or sting people or animals. However, similar to aphids, they excrete a sugary substance called honeydew that can attract stinging insects.
- What is being done about spotted lanternfly?
 - The Maryland Department of Agriculture is working to slow the spread of spotted lanternfly, however there is no residential spraying program to remove them.

- What can I do about spotted lanternfly?
 - During the winter and early spring, residents should be on the lookout for spotted lanternfly egg masses. Eggs can be crushed or scraped into rubbing alcohol or soapy water to prevent them from hatching the following year.
 - To manage larger populations of spotted lanternfly starting in late spring, residents can construct a circle trap using inexpensive materials from around the home. It is not recommended to use insecticides or sticky bands to manage spotted lanternfly due to their risk of harming birds, beneficial insects, and other wildlife. Instructions for how to make a circle trap can be found at <https://extension.psu.edu/how-to-build-a-new-style-spotted-lanternfly-circle-trap>
- Is Baltimore City part of the quarantine area for spotted lanternfly? What does that mean?
 - Yes, Baltimore City falls within the spotted lanternfly quarantine area. The quarantine affects businesses that move certain regulated materials from or within the quarantine area; to comply with the quarantine, businesses should obtain a permit from the Maryland Department of Agriculture (or appropriate department in another state.) The full text of the quarantine order can be found at [Quarantine Order](#) and a map of the full quarantine zone in Maryland can be viewed at [Full Quarantine Order Map](#)
- Can we eradicate spotted lanternfly?
 - Probably not! This insect is likely to remain part of our landscape for the foreseeable future.
- What has happened in other areas with spotted lanternfly?
 - From observations in Pennsylvania, spotted lanternfly populations tend to grow quickly, building up to large populations. In general, after about two years, the population declines, though the reasons why aren't yet known for certain. It is possible that the populations may increase cyclically in future years; these patterns, and the mechanisms behind them, are currently being studied.
- Where can I learn more about spotted lanternfly?
 - Maryland State Department of Agriculture: <https://mda.maryland.gov/plants-pests/Pages/spotted-lantern-fly.aspx>
 - Maryland State Extension: <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/spotted-lanternfly-management-residents>
 - PennState Extension: <https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly>