

<https://www.njherald.com/story/news/environment/2022/06/15/spotted-lanternfly-infesting-nj-what-to-do/7569322001/>

Get the shoe handy.

Break out the fly swatter.

It's killing season in New Jersey.

The beautiful — but dreaded — spotted lanternfly is back. The next generation of plant hopper and crop destroyer has begun hatching in every corner of New Jersey after their dormant winter.

But despite quarantines and the state's "Stomp It Out" campaign to get New Jerseyans to crush the bug with their feet, experts say the spotted lanternfly will continue to flourish in 2022.

"With few predators and no parasites in New Jersey to keep them in check, each year's population will be bigger than the last," said Matthew Aardema, a Montclair State University entomologist, who has already seen large quantities this spring near his Mercer County home.



The spotted lanternfly, a native of China, most likely came to the U.S. as a hitchhiker on a cargo container. It was first found in New Jersey four years ago despite efforts to contain it in eastern Pennsylvania, where it was first discovered in the U.S.

Now they have infested nearly every corner of New Jersey. They have already been seen clinging to trees in the deep forests of the Highlands and Pinelands, as well as scaling the facades of high-rises in densely populated Hudson County.

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The life cycle of the spotted lanternfly begins in mid-spring when they hatch from egg clusters that were laid by the prior generation last fall. Right now, they are in their early nymph stage, in which they appear black and very small. Two giveaways are their white spots and ability to jump a foot or more.

Spotted lanternflies love to feed on the tree of heaven. But the problem in New Jersey and other eastern states is that they will suck the sap from as many as 70 plant species, especially fruit trees. As they feed, they secrete a sugary substance that draws other insects such as wasps and ants to feed and promotes mold growth. It leads to a one-two punch that can weaken the tree and eventually contribute to its death.



Despite their spread, New Jersey farmers did not report any significant damage in 2021.

The state Department of Agriculture has even set up a website — [badbug.nj.gov](http://badbug.nj.gov) — for the public to get information and report sightings.

The agency is already starting to get reports from the public, but not enough yet to determine where there is a concentration, said Jeff Wolfe, a department spokesman.

That will likely change as spotted lanternflies morph into more colorful stages, in which they appear red and black, and later as adults with wings and long antennas. Last summer, in August alone the New Jersey Department of Agriculture received almost 10,000 emails and phone calls concerning the pest.

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If summer 2022 is anything like summer 2021, they will likely be everywhere.

The spotted lanternfly has too many different plants it can feed on and is too mobile for total elimination or even control to work, Aardema said.

Populations can persist in remote locations such as densely wooded areas that would never be sprayed with insecticides or even checked. The best strategy would be to stop infestations in vineyards, orchards, plant nurseries and other similar locations.

"They will not be eliminated and are almost surely here to stay," Aardema said.

## **Quarantine zone**

New Jersey has set up a 13-county quarantine zone that puts restrictions on the transportation of firewood, landscaping equipment, packing materials, plants and trees outside the area to ensure the insect's eggs are not inadvertently spread. The counties are:

- Burlington
- Camden
- Essex
- Gloucester
- Hunterdon
- Mercer
- Middlesex
- Monmouth
- Morris
- Salem
- Somerset
- Union
- Warren

*Scott Fallon has covered the COVID-19 pandemic since its onset in March 2020. To get unlimited access to the latest news about the pandemic's impact on New Jersey, please subscribe or activate your digital account today.*

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