

A New Invasive Pest: The Spotted Lanternfly

A tree- and crop-damaging insect called the spotted lanternfly that is native to Asia has been found in New York State, and experts are asking the public to help spot the invasive species.

The colorful insect, which has two sets of wings and can walk, jump or fly, can affect grapes, hops, almonds, apples, cherries and several varieties of trees, including oak, pine, poplar, and sycamore.

“This pest has the potential to severely impact our forests, as well as our state’s agricultural and tourism industries,” state Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos said. "Our forested lands have already been stressed by southern pine beetle and gypsy moth infestations, as well as the oak wilt fungus."

The spotted lanternflies, which have two sets of multicolor wings and look like escapees from horror movies, devour sap, often creating weeping wounds in their hosts that draw other insect swarms, experts said. Their so-called honeydew secretions can coat their host, allowing sooty mold to grow. The adults are about one inch long and a half-inch wide with large wings that are speckled, dotted and striped in black, brown, red, yellow and white. Bark camouflages them unless they are startled and expose their distinctive red hind wings. The insects lay eggs on many surfaces from firewood and lawnmowers to yard waste and vehicles, experts say. Adult insects lay eggs from late September to October. Wingless, black and white nymphs hatch from April to May, becoming adults in July. Just one egg mass might contain 30 to 50 eggs.

The insects are found normally in China, India, Japan and Vietnam. The first detection in the United States was documented in Pennsylvania in 2014. The insect was also found in Delaware state and Delaware County, New York, in November, according to a news release from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

If you believe you've found spotted lanternfly in New York State, take the following steps: Take pictures of the insect, egg masses and/or infestation signs as described above (include something for scale such as a coin or ruler) and email to spottedlanternfly@dec.ny.gov; note the location (address, intersecting roads, landmarks or GPS coordinates).

