

## Oakland County, state officials ask for help killing spotted lanternflies

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Jun. 11—Spotted lanternflies are back.

Just days ago, Oakland County naturalists searching for egg masses and destroying them found a few that had already hatched. Last year, the insects were discovered at a county water treatment plant in Pontiac where a cluster of tree of heaven — a spotted lanternfly favorite — had taken root.

Young lanternflies, called nymphs, need to be stopped before they reach adulthood and breed. Feeding lanternflies excrete a sticky liquid called honeydew which causes sooty mold that discolors and kills trees and plants.

Sarah Cook-Maylen, the county parks department's chief of natural resources and sustainability, said county workers looking for egg masses are sharing information with state officials.

"We can't get them all, once they're hatched," she said. "We'll start spraying trees this year — individually, not an aerial spray."

Residents play a critical role in defending Michigan's trees and crops from the pest.

Anyone who sees a suspected lanternfly or other invasive species is asked to report it to the state's Eyes in the Field program. People should take a photo and note the date, time and place the insect was spotted (and hopefully squashed).

Joanne Foreman, spokeswoman for the invasive species program run by Michigan DNR, EGLE and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) said officials met last week with Michigan State University researchers and extension office officials to develop a strategy to stop the infestation.

Later this month, the state will launch an awareness campaign complete with billboards declaring: "See it. Squish it. Report it."

MSU is putting out traps to check for infestations beyond Oakland County.

People should learn what a spotted lanternfly looks like, Foreman said, but that's complicated. Their looks change at almost every life stage. Newborns are an all-black flying insect that morph into a black winged insect as a young nymph, then red, black and white as a late nymph to its adult look: gray wings with a red cast and black spots.

Right now, people can help by finding the putty-like egg masses on tree trunks.

Foreman said egg masses should be scraped from tree trunks and either burned or put into a sealable bag with alcohol or hand sanitizer and squished.

"Take a photo of that egg mass before you squish it," she said.

Foreman said checking vehicles at each stop on a trip is vital, whether you're traveling 50 miles or three hours.

"You could unintentionally be bringing things up north and ruining your favorite spots," Foreman said, adding that people should plan on buying firewood where they are vacationing, because carrying a pile of wood from one county to another is one of the easiest ways to expand an infestation.

"Spotted lanternflies are what they call a good plant hopper," said Jennifer Holton, MDARD's communication director. "You could easily take it from one place to another if you're not careful."

They will attack black walnut, river birch, willow, sumac, and red maple trees. If they get out of Oakland County, they have the potential to decimate Michigan's grape crops, valued at \$30 billion annually.

People traveling for vacations or to weekend getaways should check before and after each stop for spotted lanternflies or any bug that may be hitching a ride, Holton said. Common hiding spots are wheel wells, front grills or anywhere on a camper or boat trailer.

The state's plant health inspectors look for a variety of pests as they review nursery stock to make

sure anything coming into the state or leaving the state is pest-free, Holton said. So far there's no sign of lanternflies outside of Oakland County. More than a dozen states are currently fighting off the pest, which is why anyone traveling outside the state should check their vehicles for the insect, she said.

Foreman said the state responds to anyone submitting a report to Eyes in the Field, either to confirm that it is a spotted lanternfly or to ID a pest if it isn't a lanternfly.

People can report spotted lanternfly sightings and share up to three photos online with Michigan's Eyes in the Field program, <https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/ors/Survey/38> or call or text (800) 292-7800, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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