

County seeks to slow bug invasion

How residents can fight spotted lanternflies

Nicolette White Burlington County Times
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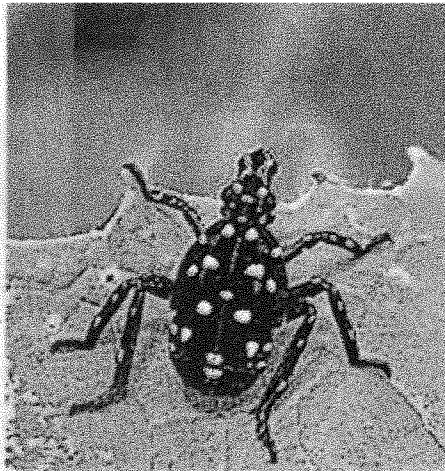
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MOUNT HOLLY – Burlington County Parks officials say there's still time to fight back against the invasive spotted lanternfly growing into fully-winged adults despite having laid their eggs.

In an effort to fight off the bug, the Burlington County Parks System has created an information page on their website to educate and provide residents with tips on how to recognize and rid of the plant-destroying species. Experts say the next few weeks will be critical in trying to control the population at its most vulnerable stage — a nymph without wings — to prevent even more damage to local vegetation.

"We began recruiting volunteers to help us battle the lanternfly infestation this winter and spring because we wanted to protect our scenic parks, forests and farms," said Burlington County Commissioner Linda Hynes. "Our fight is continuing into the summer as we try to eliminate as many of these invading insects as possible before they take flight and spread even farther across our county."

The insect, native to Asia, feeds on plant life such as fruit trees, ornamental trees, woody trees, vegetables, herbs, grapes and vines. Infected plants will have a sticky secretion left on them from the bug and may appear to be weeping or oozing. There also may be a fermented odor coming from the plant.

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Spotted lanternflies are invasive planthoppers that feed on plant sap in their nymph and adult life stages. The photos show how the insects typically appear at the early nymph life stage, late nymph stage and as fully-formed adults. The Burlington County Parks System has created a special spotted lanternfly resources page to help residents identify and destroy the insects.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BURLINGTON COUNTY PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

Lanternfly

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Spotted lanternflies were first spotted in Burlington County in 2019 with sightings in all 13 of the county's parks last year. A significant number of sightings include reports within Amico Island Park in Delran, Pennington Park in Delanco and Boundary Creek in Moorestown.

The sightings of the bugs have become so widespread that Burlington County is now considered a quarantine county in addition to Camden, Gloucester, Hunterdon, Mercer, Salem, Somerset and Warren counties. Sightings by residents in these counties do not need to be reported to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, but they are encouraged to check their vehicles, trailers, and other outdoor items when traveling to another location outside of the quarantine zone.

Residents are also being urged to be on the lookout for the bugs at any stage in their life cycle and kill them if possible.

To help battle the bug, Burlington County recruited more than 180 volunteers to scrape lanternfly egg masses from trees in parks and other properties taking over 200 hours to complete and helping to destroy more than 7,000 egg masses.

Despite these efforts, Parks officials report a significantly higher number nymph population in the county compared to last summer.

A natural method that is suggested to eliminate the bug is to spray them with a mix of dish soap and water, with a recommended ratio of 2 ½ tablespoons of detergent in 1 gallon of water or as much as 10 tablespoons per gallon.

Another suggested trap is to place Pine Sol or any brand of all-purpose cleaner in a bowl with two packets of sugar. The scent from the mix attracts the nymphs and they should drown once in the water bowl.

Links to additional trap proposals and information is available on the Burlington County Parks' lanternfly resources page.

"Our County is in this fight for the long haul and we're asking for everyone's help to stem the tide and keep this invasive pest from damaging many of the trees, plants and crops we love here in Burlington County and across New Jersey," said Hynes.

Nicolette White is the Diversity and Inclusion reporter for the Burlington County Times, The Daily Journal and Courier-Post. She is a Temple University graduate with Dallas, Texas roots. Send tips to nwhite@gannett.com and follow her on Twitter @nicolettejwhite. Please support local journalism with a digital subscription.