

## Spotted Lanternfly: A New Sugarbush Threat

by Dr. Eric Randall

A new foreign invader could have a substantially negative impact on the eastern North American hardwoods in general, and sugarbushes in particular. The Spotted Lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*, SLF) was first detected near Philadelphia, PA in 2014 and since has spread throughout much of the Commonwealth and has been sighted in about a half dozen New York counties and in several sites in southern New England.

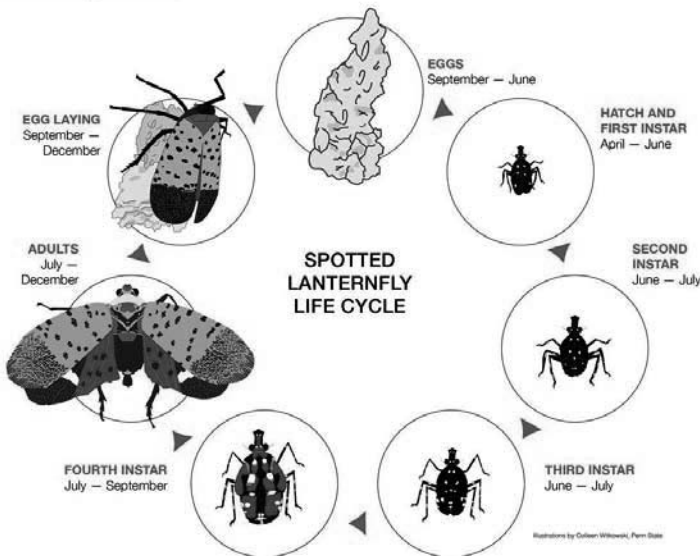
All pest alerts should be taken seriously and it seems like we are routinely reminded of the newest or most threatening among them. Sadly, the influx of non-native invasive species is directly related to modern transportation and our global exchange of goods, and this daunting pest seems to follow the all too familiar "invasion curve."

SLF has a voracious appetite for grapes, fruit trees, hardwoods like maple, cherry and oak, and seems to relish other horticultural crops as well. Penn State and Cornell researchers, as well as USDA scientists, have worked earnestly in search of both biological as well as chemical controls for this alien invader before it mirrors the damage done recently by the Emerald Ash borer or the Asian Longhorned Beetle.

The Spotted Lanternfly seems to seek out *Ailanthus altissima* (Tree of Heaven), another invasive species, as a preferred host in completing its life cycle. While the thought of one invasive species exacting some form of control over another invasive seems appropriate, the SLF also prefers to mature and feed heavily on native species and economic crops like grape vineyards and sugar maple groves.

SLF damages its victims by wounding and removing copious amounts of sap via its mouth. This process injures the host and provides a large supply of insect generated waste (honeydew) which, in

Insect sizes have been enlarged to show detail.



turn, creates a substrate for sooty mold, furthering damage to the grape vine, fruit, or hardwood tree.

SLF is not a vigorous or strong winged insect capable of long distance flight. It seems to move from plant to plant and place to place with a gliding rather than a winged flight pattern. But, what it lacks in long distance powered flight, it makes up for with mass transport as evidenced by the thousands upon thousands of insects preying on their host.

Promisingly, in early May researchers identified a couple of native pathogenic fungi which appear to provide some measure of biological control against the SLF. It is too early to think that these biocontrols will be the "silver bullet," but it does provide the fruit, wine and hardwood industries with a

bit of hope that this nasty pernicious invader might be controlled.

What every citizen, resident, land owner and sugarmaker needs to know:

- 1) Don't transport firewood, lumber, bricks or nursery materials from quarantine areas.
- 2) Know the Spotted Lanternfly life cycles and the several different stages of this insect, from egg masses through the adult insects, (see preceding page).
- 3) If you see it, report it to your State DEC, Cooperative Extension or the Land Grant University Department of Entomology in your region.
- 4) Tell your neighbors to be on the lookout for this highly destructive insect.



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