

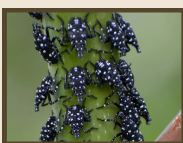


TREE OF HEAVEN & LANTERNFLY

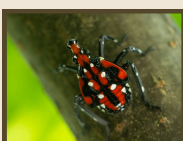
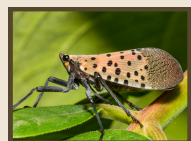
A Problem Pair

Environmental Message June 2026

Did you know? When the tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) first arrived in America in the late 1700s, people thought they'd found the perfect urban tree. It was fast-growing, pollution-tolerant, and hardy in poor soil. It was planted along city streets all over, but that "miracle tree" didn't stay polite. Its roots cracked sidewalks, its seedlings popped up everywhere, and it crowded out native plants. It's also the favorite host of the invasive spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*), giving the pest a foothold across the country's ROW, rail corridors, and utility easements.

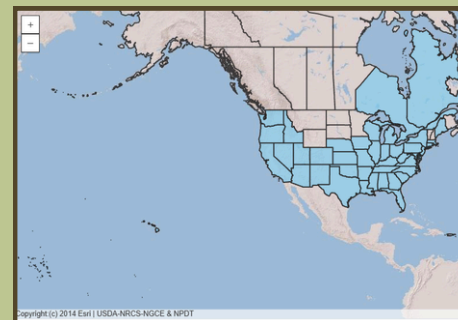


Host Tree, Pest Problem: Spotted lanternfly is an invasive insect that feeds on plant sap and can weaken trees, vines and other vegetation over time. It is strongly associated with tree of heaven, one of its preferred host plants, making tree of heaven identification an important first step in monitoring and control. Crews should watch for egg masses, nymphs and adults on tree trunks, equipment and nearby vegetation, and report sightings quickly to help slow its spread.



Control: Tree of heaven is one of the most aggressive and resilient woody invasives in North America. With extensive root systems that can sprout up to 50 feet from the parent tree and prolific seed production, the tree of heaven is tough to target. However, it's worth the effort. Removing them can directly reduce lanternfly populations and slow their spread. Note that cutting alone actually stimulates new growth, turning one tree into a dense thicket within months. **Always pair herbicide treatment with cutting and re-treat for several years.**

Distribution Map



References / Works Cited

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