The new pest in town: spotted lanternfly

International trade has brought another exotic pest to North America. The spotted lanternfly, *Lycorma delicatula*, has been detected in parts of Pennsylvania. Native to China, India, Japan, and Vietnam, it already is an invasive pest in Korea.

This planthopper uses its tubular mouthparts to pierce phloem tissues of foliage and young stems on trees and other woody plants and suck out very large quantities of liquids. Because the insect prefers species with high concentrations of sugar in their sap, mold can grow on sites were feeding has occurred. The feeding and potential mold growth can hinder the growth of the tree and could eventually cause mortality.

Although the lanternfly is not a strong flier, it is an excellent jumper and easily moves from one place to another when people transport egg masses laid on smooth surfaces such as cars or smooth-barked trees like tree-of-heaven. Egg masses will be present in October and hatch as early as April.

A: Adult
B: Egg masses, note the waxy coating.
C: Adult, lateral view

Photos used from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Pest Alert, Spotted Lanternfly.
Host species for the spotted lanternfly include apple, birch, cherry, dogwood, grape, lilac, maple, poplar, stone fruits, and tree-of-heaven. The insect’s first preferred host is tree-of-heaven, most likely due to its high concentrations of cytotoxic alkaloids, which may protect egg masses from predation.

What to do: Be on the lookout for suspicious egg masses on smooth outdoor surfaces. They tend to include 30 to 50 small eggs in a gray, waxy, mudlike coating. Hatched eggs appear as brownish seedlike deposits in four to seven columns about 1 inch long. Trees attacked by the spotted lanternfly often will show a gray or black trail of moldy sap down the trunk.

Watch plants carefully during the growing season for signs of stress or wilt and for excess dew or residue buildup on the bark. Report potential pests to the University of Illinois Plant Clinic. Location and other information can be found at: http://web.extension.illinois.edu/plantclinic/