

Spotted lanternfly infestations have expanded in Mass. Here's what that means for homeowners.

By [Bryan Hecht](#) Globe Correspondent, Updated September 7, 2026, [1 hour ago](#)



Spotted lanternflies have been in Worcester since 2022. The bugs first appeared in Fitchburg in 2021 and infestations have spread to almost 150 communities now. The parks in Worcester have been notorious for having these bugs, such as Green Hill Park. DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

The spotted lanternfly, an invasive insect that can imperil certain kinds of trees and create headaches as its sticky excrement mists down onto patios and cars, has now been found in almost 150 communities in Massachusetts, about triple this time last year, officials say.

Just weeks ago, New Hampshire officials [recorded what could be their first ever wild lanternfly population](#), spurring concerns that the pests are moving north.

Native to Asia, [spotted lanternfly larvae pierce plants and the bark of trees, feeding on their sap](#), leaving behind a sticky residue, and inviting mold growth. They can be especially active around grapevines and maple, apple, and black walnut trees. They don't fly but hop rapidly from place to place.

During a serious infestation, hundreds of flies can swarm tree trunks, yards, even decks, generating a mess for homeowners. Residents in other states have reported having to [use umbrellas as a shield against deluges of lanternfly poop](#) while their [backyard trees turned an apocalyptic black](#) from the waste.





Spotted lanternflies clustered on a tree at Green Hill Park in Worcester. They feed on nutrient-rich phloem sap from trees, which causes physical damage. DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

September is considered peak season for the bugs, which mature into gray winged flies about an inch long with black spots and red accents.

“Massachusetts is just now getting to the point where there is such a heavy infestation of spotted lanternfly that the general public is starting to take notice,” said Jennifer Forman-Orth, an environmental biologist with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. “They just [keep] spreading.”

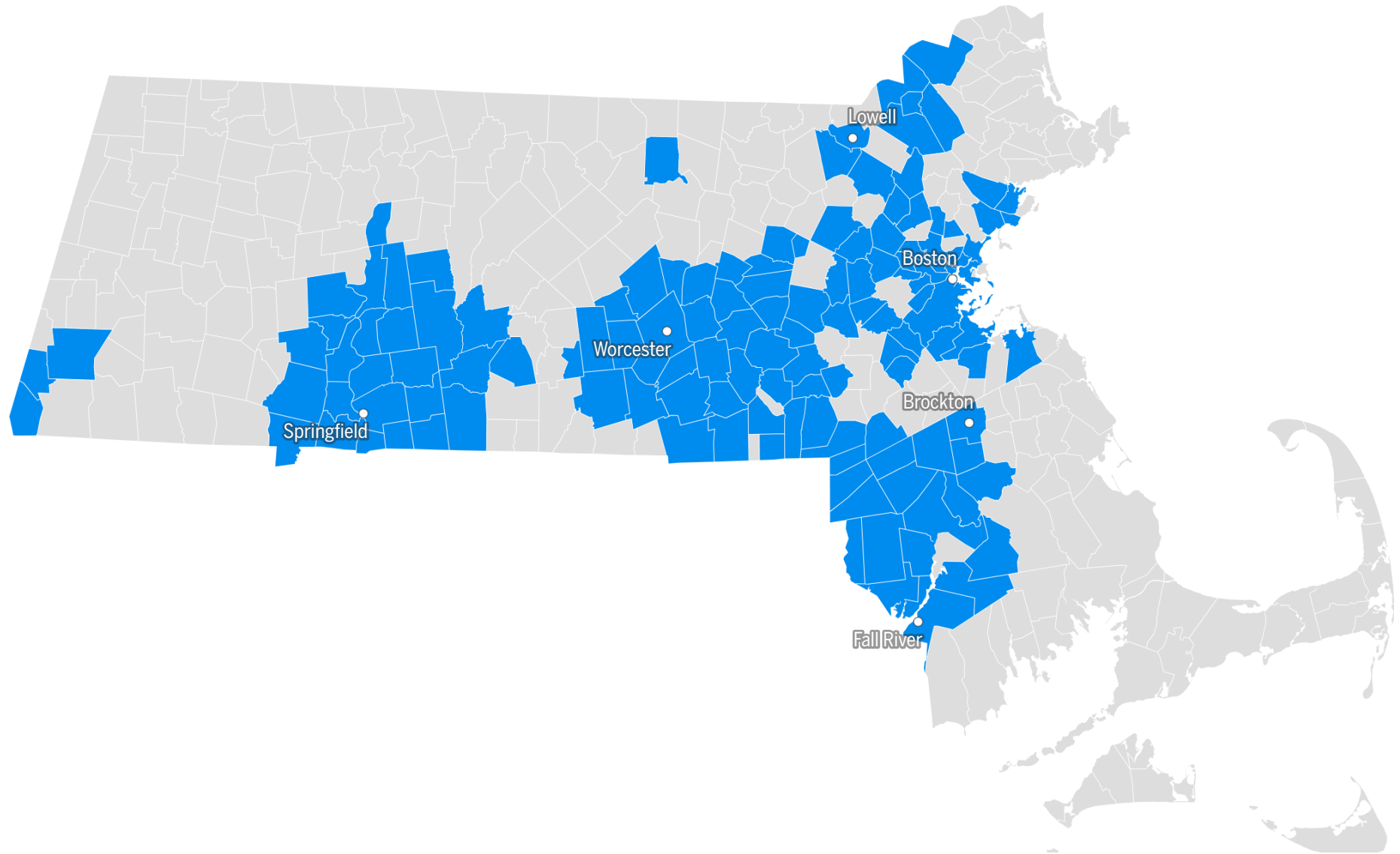
Last August, state officials reported lanternflies in [more than 50](#) cities and towns. Now, infestations have [spread to almost 150](#) communities, where large lanternfly populations lay eggs and feed on local plants.

“Once those eggs hatch,” said Piera Siegert, a New Hampshire state entomologist, “you can reduce” the lanternfly populations, “but it would be very difficult” to eradicate them. By spring, the eggs hatch into tiny black nymphs that disperse quickly and become hard to catch.

Massachusetts hasn’t seen significant reports of tree death or long-term damage from the flies, but that can take years, Forman-Orth said, even with a strong infestation.

Harmless to humans and pets, lanternflies are what’s known as a [nuisance pest](#), according to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, which has logged the species in all of its counties.

Spotted lanternfly infestation present



But for some farmers, particularly growers of fruits, the insects represent a greater danger.

“They attack our grapes more than any other plant,” said John Galvan, a commercial small-fruit production researcher with UMass Extension.

He estimates roughly 10 percent of all orchard and berry farmers in Massachusetts may eventually be affected.

Agritourism ventures including pick-your-own orchards are especially at risk, both from the flies feeding on tree sap and the unpleasant swarms driving away visitors, Siegert said.

The flies’ main host plant is [tree-of-heaven](#), an invasive species from China.

Even if you were to cut those down, you shouldn’t be surprised to find the insects infesting your backyard maple instead, said Rolf Briggs, owner of Holliston-based Tree Specialists Inc., who has been getting two to three calls a week from homeowners about lanternfly outbreaks.

He describes patios and cars that have turned completely black under layers of sooty mold that feeds on the lanternflies’ sugary excrement.

The bugs “pass so much liquid that it comes to be like a misting of rain across your property,” Briggs said. “The layers of fungus get thicker and thicker until you can’t see the green of the leaves anymore, it’s all black.”

In Pennsylvania, where lanternflies first appeared in the US, “they had it so bad that people were using umbrellas to go from their front doors to their cars,” Briggs added. “That’s the future of what we’re going to see.”

The insects are thought to have arrived in the US [as eggs](#) inside a [shipment of stone](#) bound for Pennsylvania from Asia [sometime between 2012 and 2014](#).

In 2019, Penn State economists [estimated that](#) unchecked growth of spotted lanternfly populations was costing their state around \$324 million a year in losses to fruit growers and the forestry industry.

But seven years later, such losses haven't fully materialized, said Timothy Kelsey, a professor in agricultural economics at Penn State. Still, lanternfly prevention efforts are costing producers and homeowners, he added, and will likely do the same in a denser state like Massachusetts.



A spotted lanternfly landed on a tree in Green Hill Park in Worcester. September is considered peak season for the bugs. DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

“The out-of-pocket costs for the homeowners will exist in Massachusetts regardless of what the type of agricultural production you have,” he said.

Several states, including Pennsylvania, have [imposed quarantining measures](#), which heap extra costs onto farmers who must now check their plant shipments to ensure they are free from claylike egg deposits or the small black bugs hiding inside, Siegert said.

In spite of those efforts, Pennsylvania [still has lanternflies in more than 80 percent of its counties](#) as of 2026, state data show.

“We already know from other states we can’t stop the spread,” Forman-Orth said, but “if you slow it down you can give people time to prepare to manage this pest.”

Lanternflies have already been [spotted in every county of Connecticut](#) as of this year, and on Aug. 25, New Hampshire officials [confirmed](#) their first field detection of spotted lanternflies in Salem.

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources has so far focused on trying to “slow the spread” to uninfested northern states, Forman-Orth said.

That means dealing with lanternfly populations in Massachusetts is mostly left up to residents.

Irene Phipps, who lives in Framingham, said it seemed like hundreds of lanternflies appeared in her neighborhood overnight recently.

“It’s upsetting,” she said, adding she had noticed them first in New York City over a year ago and heard friends complaining about the flies in Boston last year, before finally finding trees near her apartment covered.

Massachusetts officials have not mandated quarantining methods but have released multiple [training guides](#) on fly removal and containment.



A sign at the Green Hill Park in Worcester warned about the Asian longhorned beetle, another destructive pest. DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE (ANOPLOPHORA GLABRIPENNIS)

As of 2013, Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) infestations have been found in New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Ohio, Massachusetts, and Canada. It is commonly believed the ALB came to Worcester from China in the early 1990s in untreated, wooden shipping pallets. Since the ALB prefers the upper canopy of trees, the infestation went undetected for at least fifteen years. Federal protocol requires infested trees be cut then chipped twice into one inch pieces. Although many thousands of trees were removed, a reforestation program is ongoing to restore the canopy.

A What does the Asian Longhorned Beetle (Anoplophora glabripennis) look like?

- It is 1 inch to 1 1/2 inches in length.
- It has long antennae banded with black and white (longer than the insect's body).
- It has a shiny, jet black body with distinctive white spots.
- It has six legs.
- It may have blue feet.

Note: ALB is harmless to humans and pets.

B Which trees are most likely to host the Asian Longhorned Beetle?

- The ALB lives on and in most hardwood trees of the Northeast except Oak and Birch. Hosts to the Asian Longhorned Beetle are Maples (Acer), Birch (Betula), Willow (Salix), Elm (Ulmus), Horse Chestnut (Aesculus), Ash (Fraxinus), Mountain Ash (Sorbus), Poplar (Populus), Sycamore (Platanus), London Plane (Platanus), Mimosa (Albizia), Hackberry (Celtis), Katsura Tree (Cercidiphyllum), Goldenrain Tree (Koelneriana).

C Where should you look to spot an infestation?



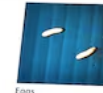
- Use binoculars to search the top of the tree (asianlonghornedbeetle.com).
- Look for this sign of infestation: Exit holes which are visible on the bark of the tree—holes are very distinctive, perfectly round, 3/8" to 1/2" diameter.

D How can you identify the egg-laying sites?



- Egg laying sites are shallow pits in bark about 1/2" wide.
- Fresh sites are brightly colored, often orange.
- Color fades over time.

E Lifecycle of the ALB



F What are the dangers posed by the Asian Longhorned Beetle?

The ALB is not native to the United States. Therefore, as a nonnative pest, it has no known indigenous natural predators. Its presence in our hardwood trees represents an unmet threat to the Great Northeastern Hardwood Forest.



Beginning just north of Worcester, the Great Northeastern Hardwood Forest extends for millions of acres into Canada and west to the shores of the Great Lakes. Should the Worcester area ALB infestation spread into this vast forest, there would be extreme economic and environmental consequences.

G WHAT YOU CAN DO?



- DO NOT MOVE FIREWOOD.