

Upper Deerfield Township

Environmental Commission



Nature's Clever Rodent

Clever or annoying? Cute-as-a-button or pain-in-the-neck? Eastern gray squirrels have been called all these things, while earning our admiration for their capabilities.

Although they look big and fluffy, these busy mammals are quite skinny under their bushy fur, which is a mixture of brown, gray and white with silvery tips on their agile tails. If you've watched them bound across the lawn in three-foot leaps, you can see how useful their tails are, providing balance, heat, communication and even a rudder when swimming. When they run down a tree head first, they grip the bark by rotating their clawed feet 180 degrees. They're very social and will even share their nests with other gray squirrels, especially in winter.

Females breed as early as six months of age, with a first litter of typically 1-4 tiny, pink, half-ounce kits being born between December and February and then possibly a second litter in June or July. Only one in four kits survives to one year of age and the mortality rate is approximately 55% for the second year. In your yard, their life expectancy is about two years, although they can live longer under more sheltered conditions. Predators include humans and their vehicles, hawks, weasels, raccoons, bobcats, coyotes, foxes, domestic and feral cats, snakes, owls and dogs.

The grey squirrel is essential to forest regeneration, burying thousands of nuts and seeds each year to use as a food source during the winter months. Amazingly, they can find 85% of these stashes months later, even under the snow, by using landmarks and their keen senses of smell and space. Some seeds will germinate and grow new trees for the future.



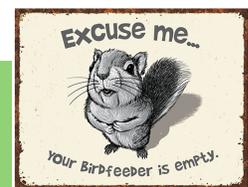
NESTS

Squirrels build huge, twiggy nests high up in tree cavities or tall hardwood trees.



FOOD

Fruit, nuts, seeds, fungi, insects, plant buds, bark, roots and sometimes frogs, small birds or their eggs.



COMMUNICATING

Squirrels bark, buzz, wail, squeal, squeak, rasp, chatter, purr, trill and flick their tails.

Spotted Lanternfly Control



Destroy the Eggs Thirteen NJ counties, including Salem, Camden and Gloucester, are now under spotted lanternfly quarantine and it has been found in growing numbers throughout Upper Deerfield Township. To try to avoid a full-scale invasion next summer, it is critical to find and destroy the eggs, which will remain viable until next July. SLF will continue to lay eggs through the first few frosts and each little 1" high egg mass contains 30-50 eggs. Look for the egg masses on many surfaces including rocks and tree

trunks, tires, shingles, sidewalks and patios and the underside of branches. Use a metal tool, such as a paint scraper, spatula, spoon, or table knife to scrape the eggs into a double plastic bag or a bottle of hand sanitizer or alcohol. The Department of Agriculture urges you to destroy any that you see, then go to badbug.nj.gov and report the location of the sighting.

Remove Tree-of-Heaven To reduce the population of this destructive insect, get rid of their host tree: the tree-of-heaven. This fast-growing, foul-smelling invasive species—resembling the native staghorn sumac—can grow to 70' tall and 6' in diameter and produce chemicals that limit the growth of other trees. Females are prolific seed-makers, producing as many as 300,000 seeds annually. With an extensive root system and the ability to resprout after cutting, the tree is difficult to control. Treating them with a systemic herbicide using the "hack-and-squirt" method will target the roots if it is applied before the onset of fall color. The herbicide will not reach the roots through a cut stump or after the leaves turn color, so after November 1, it's better to wait until they leaf out next spring. More information is available from the NJ Department of Agriculture at NJ.gov.



**STOMP
IT
OUT!**



This year's spotted lanternflies will live until December, so continue to eliminate them by squishing or whatever works. Knock them down from the trees with a rake or a broom and then "Stomp Them Out!"