

Responses to common misconceptions and inaccurate statements about my recent article on spotted lanternflies on HumaneGardener.com:

In response to commenters attributing their stomping efforts to Doug Tallamy:

When I heard from someone that they would keep stomping because Doug Tallamy said to do so, it didn't sound to me like something Doug would say, especially not in such a rigid and unnuanced way. So I followed up with him to hear his thoughts directly. Here is what he wrote, and he gave me permission to share it: "The problem with recorded webinars is that everything one says becomes gospel forever. I think I was talking about removing *Ailanthus*, which I have been promoting for decades, but the spotted lanternfly gives some people motivation to actually remove it from their properties. I agree, teaching our kids to squish creatures leaves a nasty taste in my mouth and it won't actually control the population. The good news is that SLF seems to be controlling itself. I live in southeast PA and all around me their populations have crashed. Last year they turned the trunks of my butternut trees black. This year I have only found 3 adults on our property. I am hearing this from people all around here. No one knows why this is happening but it's not unheard of. Remember how numerous the brown marmorated stink bug was a few years ago? Today, they are still here but only at a fraction of that initial population surge. So, my feeling is, the best way to deal with SLF today is to wait for tomorrow. It really looks like they are declining all on their own."

In response to commenters claiming that my article goes against "science" or that the science and reasoning are "unsound," "skewed," "irresponsible," "irrational," "nonsense," etc.

Calling something a name does not make it so. Not a single commenter has been able to provide any specific support for claims that I did not "stick to the science" or that the reasoning is unsound. My article includes links to recent studies showing that spotted lanternflies are not killing native trees, contrary to initial predictions. And there is no science to support the stomping of lanternflies as a means of reducing overall populations. Instead, there are scientists saying that it is not effective, including a Cornell researcher who told the *New York Times* that the main function of the stomping campaigns is to "engage the public" and make them feel "empowered." A William Paterson University entomologist told *Jersey Shore News* that stomping is not effective and that reducing tree of heaven is a better means of control. (See <https://www.nytimes.com/.../spotted-lanternfly-nyc.html> and [https://www.northjersey.com/.../spotted.../70919781007/.](https://www.northjersey.com/.../spotted.../70919781007/))

These are just two of many others, a couple of whom I've spoken with personally.

In response to comments saying that I'm maligning farmers and don't care about crops:

Asking people to reconsider what they do in their home landscapes does not malign farmers. Agricultural lands and wildlife habitats are managed differently, as the goals are different. Crops are generally monocultures, and native plant/wildlife gardens are more diverse. If you want to follow ag-based advice in your wildlife habitat, to take just one example, then you would also pull out milkweed and pokeweed and violets and Virginia creeper and many other natives that are thought to disrupt crop growth. Advocating for different management of these two very different types of lands—ag lands and native plant gardens—does not equate to not caring about crops or farmers

In response to comments saying that I advocate for proliferation of tree of heaven and invasive species: This is the opposite of what I advised in the article. I included a video for how to identify tree of heaven as well as descriptions of how I remove it. It's regrettable when people chime in without carefully reading or double-checking the text, as such comments typically don't lend themselves to constructive and informed conversation.

In response to comments about what I eat or how I live my life:

This has suddenly and rather inexplicably become a hot topic in these forums. It's not clear why the discussion needs to veer so far off course to the point of distraction, except that personal attacks are a common strategy for avoiding real discussion about real issues. But since it was brought up and pondered again, I will tell you that I try to do as little harm as possible to animals and the planet, eating mostly plant-based foods and buying organically grown, local foods as much as possible. Do I always succeed? No, and I'm guessing few other people do either. But we can try. One commenter who questioned my eating habits also implied that I support "Big Ag." I'm not sure where this notion comes from, since I've spent a good chunk of my career writing about and advocating for alternatives to factory farming and industrialized agriculture. These comments are not customized to me or to the issue at hand.

—Nancy Lawson, 10/4/23