



Autumn is officially here. For many of us that means jumping for joy, for pumpkin spice latte, cozy sweaters, and cooler temperatures. There is another jumping thing that won't bring as much joy into our lives as the lattes.

The Asian jumping worm is Nebraska's newest invasive species. Just as the name implies it is native to Asia. It was found in Wisconsin in 2013. There are about 17 species of jumping worms found in North America and have been reported throughout the eastern and southern United States, parts of the Midwest and Oregon. To date, Asian jumping worms have been found in Douglas, Lancaster, and Platte counties in Nebraska.

Asian jumping worms are also known as jumping worms, crazy worms, Alabama jumpers and snake worms. They get these names from their crazy behavior. They jump and move around wildly when handled, almost moving like a threatened snake. These worms can even shed their tail as a defense mechanism.

These invasive pests have a unique life cycle. Asian jumping worms can reproduce without mating and produce hardened egg capsules, known as cocoons, the size of a mustard seed that survive winter in the soil. The cocoons hatch in the spring and worms rapidly develop into adulthood in 60 days. Jumping worms are easily discovered in August and September when they are at their largest and wiggliest. The adults die each winter after producing more cocoons.

What damage do they cause? Jumping worms feed in large numbers at the soil surface. They eat organic matter like leaves and mulch. They replace the soil with their castings, which are small, loose, hard pellets that have the consistency of dried coffee grounds. This material lacks water holding capacity and lacks organic matter and is not favorable for plant growth.

Don't confuse the invasive jumping worm with our common worms. European earth worms and night crawlers are the common worms that we have in our area. These worms create a pile of castings, poop, in the soil and near the surface. Common worms improve the soil. Jumping worms leave a loose, granular soil. They completely strip the soil of nutrients. Common worms have a raised pink clitellum, the narrow band near the head of the worm. Jumping worms have a clitellum that is smooth to their body, cloudy white to gray color, completely encircles the worm's metallic appearing body. One way to know if you have jumping worms or earthworms is to pour a mustard solution onto the suspect area. Mix 1/3 cup of ground yellow mustard seed with 1 gallon of water. Clear a bare patch of soil and pour the solution slowly over the soil. The worms will move to the surface and you can determine if they are invasive jumping worms or common worms. If you find Asian jumping worms, please report to <https://neinvasives.com/home>.

Control of Asian jumping worms can be difficult, so prevention is key. There are no EPA registered chemicals labeled for control of jumping worms. Prevent the spread of jumping worms by educating others about this pest, buying plants from seed or bare root, avoid buying fishing worms advertised as any of the common names of this pest, carefully inspect potted plants prior to purchase, use caution when sharing or moving plants, and do not dispose of unused worms in the environment.

No need to get all wiggly just yet, with a little prevention you too can be jumping for joy and enjoying the latte.

Elizabeth Killinger is the Horticulture Extension Educator with Nebraska Extension in Hall County. For more information contact Elizabeth at elizabeth.killinger@unl.edu, her blog at <http://huskerhort.com/>, or HuskerHort on Facebook and Twitter.