

Protect Gardens From Invasive Pests

(NAPS)—Nothing tastes better than fresh-picked fruits and vegetables. Unfortunately, invasive pests threaten to devour the crops in our gardens and farms, and the flowers, trees and plants in our landscapes. They are a real threat, costing our nation approximately \$120 billion each year.

These pests can spread quickly as they come from other countries and have few or no natural enemies here. In particular, the USDA cautions gardeners to be wary of 19 destructive, invasive species known as Hungry Pests, which include the emerald ash borer and Asian citrus psyllid. People need to be aware of these pests, because they are primarily spread in the things people move and pack.

Tips to Save Gardens

Fortunately, homeowners can follow six easy tips to protect their gardens and landscapes, and help keep Hungry Pests from spreading:

- Only buy plants and seeds from reputable sources, such as established nurseries or online businesses. Ask where they buy their plants and if they comply with federal quarantine restrictions. Temporary, roadside vendors—and even non-established dealers online—may not be doing what is required to keep plants free of pests.

- If you are in a quarantined area—check www.HungryPests.com/the-spread—don't move plants or homegrown produce. And to be safe, don't bring back plants from other areas, including abroad. That's how the Mexican fruit fly—which threatens 50 types of fruits and vegetables—entered the United States.

- When doing property clean-up, call your local USDA office to find out how to safely dispose of



By following USDA's six easy tips, you can help protect your plants, trees and crops from invasive pests.

trees, branches and other yard debris. Moving such materials outside your property in quarantined areas could spread invasive pests. Make sure your contractors also follow the procedures.

- Don't move homegrown citrus or citrus plants outside your property. That's how citrus greening, a disease that is killing America's orange groves, has spread.

- Look for round and D-shaped holes in trees. They could be the exit holes of Asian longhorned beetles or emerald ash borers. Also look for yellow, thin or wilted leaves, shoots growing from roots or tree trunks, sawdust-like material and unusual woodpecker activity. If something looks suspicious, be safe and report it using the "Report a Pest" button on the Hungry Pests' website.

- For those in the northeast quadrant of the country, inspect lawn furniture, fences and other outdoor items, and remove and immerse gypsy moth egg masses in soapy water. Gypsy moths eat more than 300 species of trees and shrubs, so early detection is key. Report findings to agricultural officials.

Go to HungryPests.com to learn more, or join the conversation on Facebook or Twitter.