

INVASIVE SPECIES FOR HOMEOWNERS

ASIAN JUMPING WORM

Amyntas agrestis, *A. tokioensis*, and *Metaphire hilgendorfi*. Family Megascolecidae

BACKGROUND

Earthworms might be a friendly sight in gardens or your favorite tool for catching fish, but most earthworms in the northeast U.S. are non-native. Jumping worms, a group of species originally from Asia, are invasive species that alter soil qualities and make it inhospitable for some plants and animals. They do this by consuming the

upper organic layer of soil, which leaches nutrients and erodes the ground. This makes it hard for many plants (including garden plants) to grow and threatens even the most well-tended lawns. What's worse—humans spread worms without realizing it, carrying jumping worm egg cases (cocoons) in soil, mulch, potted plants, landscaping equipment, and even the treads of shoes and tires.



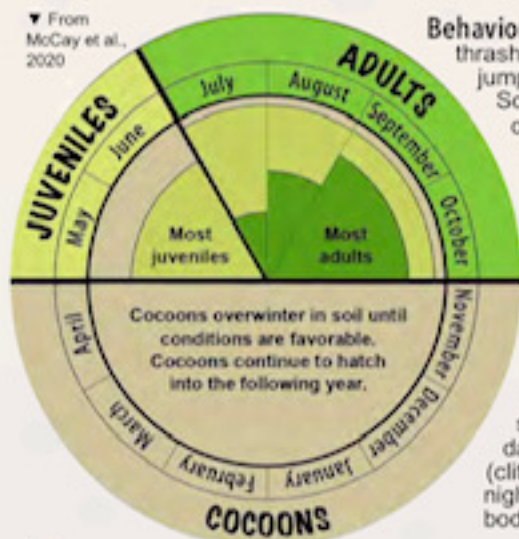
▲ Recorded sightings of jumping worm (red) in the Northeast and Midwest U.S. Data from iMapInvasives (2020).



KNOW THE WORM

Life Cycle: Most jumping worms have an annual life cycle. In the spring they hatch from poppy-seed-sized cocoons and after 70-90 days become mature and can produce new cocoons. In the late fall, adults die but the cocoons over-winter to start the next generation.

▼ From McCay et al., 2020



Behavior: These worms thrash wildly and often jump or flip over. Sometimes they cast off the end of their tail.

Castings: Their castings (feces) appear like coarse coffee grounds that create a loose layer between leaf litter and mineral soil beneath. ▶



Look-alikes: Jumping worms might be confused with another invasive worm, the nightcrawler (*Lumbricus* spp.); both can be large with dark coloring. Jumping worm adults have a smooth milky-white collar (clitellum) close to the head end (14-16 segments away), whereas nightcrawlers have a raised pink-red collar more central along the worm's body.

▲ Jumping worms hold their eggs in cocoons the size of a poppy seed, like this. Can you find the 7 other cocoons?

IN A NUTSHELL

When jumping worms invade, they consume and degrade soil which threatens the future of gardens, forests, and lawns.

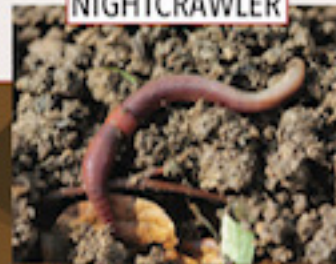
Jumping worms are often spread by people through mulch, compost, gardening tools, and treads.

Stop the spread! Use our checklist (pg. 2) to be worm-smart.

JUMPING WORM



NIGHTCRAWLER



▲ Note the collar's color and its distance from the head. Credit: UW Madison Arboretum



Jumping Worm Outreach, Research & Management

JWORM
WORKING GROUP