

Invasive Species

Jumping Worms (*Amyntas* species)



Photo by Josef Gorres, University of Vermont

Attention Compost Site Users

This species of earthworm can strip vital nutrients from topsoil and damage the roots of plants in nurseries, gardens, and turf. Check your yard waste before bringing it to the Olmsted County Compost Site. To date, Olmsted County has not found jumping worms in the finished compost at the Compost Site and continues to take measures to keep the compost free of this invasive species.

Identifying Characteristics

- **Description**— Jumping worms are a type of earthworm. They are smooth, glossy gray, or brown. Mature worms are approximately 4-5 inches in length.
- **Clitellum**— (band around the worm) is not swollen and is relatively close to the head.
- **Behavior**— They jump and thrash erratically when disturbed, and moves in an “S” pattern like a snake.
- **Signs in the soil**— Jumping worm populations strip the soil of organic matter. Resulting soil resembles dried coffee grounds.



Soil becomes granular and looks like dried coffee grounds. Photo by UW-Master Gardeners

Invasive Species: Jumping Worms

Means of Spread

Jumping worms are native to Asia; people spread them through the following means:

- Moving soil, potted landscape plants, sod, mulch, (including bark mulch or woodchips), or compost can move earthworms and their cocoons from one place to another.
- Earthworms, such as Red Wigglers purchased for composting may be contaminated with jumping worms.
- Earthworms purchased for fishing bait, such as European Nightcrawlers may be contaminated with jumping worms.

Threat to Minnesota

Invasive species populations may cause recreational, economic and ecological damage and can change how residents and visitors use and enjoy Minnesota lands and waters.


- Jumping worms can dramatically change soils, giving it a unique texture similar to coffee grounds.
- Jumping worms strip vital nutrients from topsoil and damage the roots of plants in nurseries, gardens, and turf.
- Non-native earthworms dramatically change forest soils by eating leaf litter and impacting soil chemistry, soil organisms, and plant communities. Jumping worms have been shown to have similar effects.

Precautions for Customers

- Inspect the compost for jumping worms as you load it into your vehicle/trailer.
- At home, inspect the compost as you are spreading it around your lawn or garden.
- If jumping worms are found in your lawn or garden, don't move or transport any material from your site.
- If you find jumping worms at home, destroy them by collecting them in a plastic container (with a lid) or Ziploc bag and throw them in the trash. Notify Laura.Vanriper@state.mn.us at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. If you find jumping worms in Olmsted County compost, call 507-328-7070 or email pwservice@co.olmsted.mn.us. Reducing the adult population will eventually reduce the number of egg-carrying cocoons in the landscape.
- **Arrive Clean & Leave Clean**—Clear soil and debris from vehicles, equipment, and personal gear before moving to and from a work or recreational area—they might contain jumping worms or their cocoons.



Questions? Contact Environmental Resources

 **507-328-7070**

Citations

 [**pwservice@co.olmsted.mn.us**](mailto:pwservice@co.olmsted.mn.us)

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. *Jumping Worm (Amyntas species)*. Retrieved from <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrialanimals/jumping-worm/index.html>
- University of Minnesota Extension (2017, June 27) *Jumping Worms in Minnesota* [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://blog-yard-garden-news.extension.umn.edu/2017/06/jumping-worms-in-minnesota.html>