

Invasive Jumping Worms

Jumping Worms were introduced from Asia, principally from Japan. They can also be called crazy worms, crazy snake worms, Georgia or Alabama jumpers, Jersey wigglers, wood alves, or sharks of the earth. One of the first records of introduction was at the Bronx Zoo, New York. Jumping worms were imported to the Bronx Zoo in 1948 to feed Australian platypuses. More recently, they were rapidly spread in New York following Hurricane Sandy through chipping of downed trees and movement of soil and mulch for biofuel and landfill cover.

Jumping worms alter composition of the topsoil by homogenizing the top mineral layer and natural organic layers of the soil, transforming leaf litter, soil fungi, and normal soil structure into a loose black layer of worm castings. (Frelich & Blossey et al. 2019). Their castings (feces) are coarse, dark, and granular, similar in size and shape to Grape Nuts cereal... They destabilize the soil, increase nutrient leaching and erosion, increase drought vulnerability, cause turf detachment from soil and unstable rooting, root desiccation, and low germination. Their activity has toppled stone walls in New England...

Many native trees and plants (including garden plants) cannot germinate or develop in this altered soil, while invasive species thrive. They may threaten the Maple syrup industry since sugar maples can not germinate in jumping worm altered soils.

This excellent article provides more information on identification and prevention of Jumping Worms.

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https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/CAES/DOCUMENTS/Publications/Fact_Sheets/Entomology/Jumping-worms-in-Connecticut.pdf

Russell Library held a workshop on Invasive Jumping Worms in October 2022. Watch Russell Library's [event page](#) for other great programs in invasive species.