

Ailanthus altissima, Tree of Heaven

Native to China, the Tree of Heaven crowds out native species and damages pavement and building foundations in urban areas. Tree of Heaven seeds can germinate and thrive in a variety of habitats. This tree can tolerate air pollution, heat, strong winds, drought, compacted soils, limited soil availability, nutrient poor conditions, and salty soil. One of the few things that it cannot tolerate are floods and wet soils. It has gained attention statewide as it is one of the preferred species that the Spotted Lanternfly, an extremely threatening invasive insect, utilizes for habitat and food.

Description: The stems are yellowish/reddish-brown in color. This plant has large alternating compound leaves that contain 13-40 leaflets, each individual leaflet of 3-5 inches long and 1-2 inches wide. The leaflets also have ridges/bumps at the base of the leaflet which can be used to distinguish them from other compound leaves.

Control: Chemical applications of herbicides in the months of July through September can be utilized to control the spread of this tree. When under pressure, expect adult trees to send up many sprouts along the roots. Manual removal of this tree is not very feasible.

Look-alikes: Tree of Heaven look similar to Sumac (*Rhus spp.*) due to the appearance of the leaves. The 1-2 protruding bumps at the base of each leaflet as well as the smooth leaflet edge can be used to distinguish the Tree of Heaven.

Flower Time and Description: Large clusters of small yellowish/green flowers can be observed blooming during the month of June. Flat, twisted winged fruit are also produced on female trees.

