

Tree of Heaven

Ailanthus altissima

Description

Extensive cloning; allelopathic properties present. Introduced as an ornamental because it grows quickly and is very attractive. It has a medicinal history in Asia where it has been used as an astringent, antispasmodic and parasiticide. Plant extracts are also used as herbicides. It is also a food for honeybees worldwide.

Habit

Deciduous small to large tree; 12-20 m (40-65 ft) tall and 60-100 cm (24-40 in) in diameter; crown wide-spread with multiple branches.

Leaves

Alternate, pinnately compound with 11-30 lance-shaped leaflets, leaves 30-90 cm (1-3 ft) long, 1-5 small gland tipped teeth near the base of each leaflet, dark green above and pale green below, turn yellow in fall; smell like rancid peanut butter when crushed.

Stems





Twigs very stout, light to dark brown, smooth with large V-shaped leaf scars; bark thin, gray to brownish gray, smooth with shallow fissures appearing on older trunks.

Flowers

Small, yellow-green in color, 5 petals; borne in dense clusters near ends of upper branches, male and female flowers on different plants, pollen has an offensive odor; blooms in late spring.

Fruits and Seeds

Two-winged, papery, flat samara; reddish when ripe; develop in clusters on female trees in fall, persist in winter, germinate readily, dispersed by wind, birds and water.

Habitat

Shade intolerant; thrives in poor soils; found in disturbed soils, fence rows, fields, roadsides, woodland edges, forest openings and rocky areas; very fast growing.

Reproduction

By seed and vegetatively via root suckering, up to 350,000 seeds produced annually by a single plant.

Similar

Crushed leaves or broken stems of native sumacs (*Rhus* spp.); walnuts (*Juglans* spp.) and ash (*Fraxinus* spp.); lack rancid peanut butter aroma; leaves lack gland-tipped teeth at base.

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Monitor edges, paths; hand pull seedlings before taproot develops (



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Credits

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