

# Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

Also known as Chinese sumac and stinking sumac.

Prohibited nuisance plant in the cities of Portland and Salem, Oregon.

Listed as a Weed of Concern in San Mateo Count, California.

**Threat:** Prolific seed producer that grows rapidly to overrun native vegetation • Can form impenetrable thickets • Produces toxins in the soil that prevent other plants from becoming established

- Root system is aggressive enough to damage sewers and foundations.

**Description:** Fast-growing deciduous tree 80 feet tall or more

- Bark is smooth and pale grey, twigs are light brown, with alternating leaves
- Large compound leaves grow up to 4 feet long and bear 11 to 25 leaflets, which each have one to several glandular teeth near their base
- Clusters of small, yellow-green flowers appear near the branch tips in late spring, and female trees produce seeds in late summer
- Seeds ripen into flat, twisted papery samaras that twirl as they fall to the ground
- All parts of the tree have a strong, somewhat offensive odor.



**History:** Native to central China and brought to the United States in the early 1800's.

**Spread:** Reproduces both from seeds and vegetative sprouts, re-sprouts easily from cut stumps, and produces suckers from roots • A single tree can produce from 325,000 to 350,000 seeds each year, which are easily spread by wind.

**Control:** Elimination requires diligence • Remove young plants before taproot is established, and pull young seedlings when soil is moist to ensure complete root removal • Establishment of heavy native vegetation cover will discourage seedlings • Target large female trees to reduce seed volume • Tree cutting is often counter-productive, since plant responds with stump sprouts and root suckers • Repeated cutting frequently over years may exhaust plant reserves • Herbicides are effective if used correctly, especially when treating the trunk by one of several means • Contact Oregon Department of Agriculture for updates on the proper use of herbicides to control tree of heaven.

**Alternatives:** There are many varieties of pine (native and horticultural) that will grow quickly to provide shade and are not invasive. Consult your local nursery for appropriate, non-invasive alternatives.

For more information:

Alien Plant Working Group- [www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/aial1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/aial1.htm)

The Nature Conservancy, The Global Invasive Species Initiative- <http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs/documnts/ailaalt.rtf>

Oregon Department of Agriculture- [http://egov.oregon.gov/ODA/PLANT/docs/pdf/weed\\_2005policy2.pdf](http://egov.oregon.gov/ODA/PLANT/docs/pdf/weed_2005policy2.pdf)



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