

# WANTED: INVASIVE ALIEN

## Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

**Description:** This Asian tree grows to 80 feet. The leaves are compound and grow 1 -- 3 feet long with 11 – 30 leaflets. When crushed, the leaflets have a rancid peanut butter odor. The bark is gray to dark brown, quite smooth, often with shallow cracks on older trees. Do not confuse this tree with native sumac, walnut, or ash trees which also have compound leaves.

**Environmental Threat:** A mature female Tree of Heaven produces hundreds of thousands of seeds which are spread by the wind. The tree also reproduces by sprouting from the roots, and small trees are often seen growing out from a central “mother.” This fast-growing vigorous plant quickly displaces native vegetation and is difficult to control because cutting the tree down stimulates root sprouts.

**Known Locations:** Tree of Heaven was planted in urban areas because of its hardiness and ability to grow in poor soil. Look for it along roadsides, fences and in empty lots. It is also found in natural areas of parks.

**What you can do:** Pull tiny seedlings but be sure to remove the entire root to prevent suckering. A combination of cutting and herbicidal treatment is most effective for trees taller than about 5 feet. Consult with a knowledgeable person first. Be sure to take great care when using chemicals. **READ AND FOLLOW THE LABEL!**



James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, U of Connecticut, Bugwood.org