

Chinese Tallow Tree (*Triadica sebifera*)



Image: Texas A&M Forest Service - Trees of Texas
texastreeid.tamu.edu

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What is Chinese Tallow Tree?

Chinese tallow tree (*Triadica sebifera*) is a tree native to China and Japan. Interestingly, it is reported to have been introduced by Benjamin Franklin in 1772. A few years later it was introduced to South Carolina and has since spread to every coastal state from North Carolina to Texas, inland to Arkansas and Oklahoma, and has been reported in California.

The Texas A&M Forest Service reports that since 1970, woodlands containing the highly invasive tree have increased in area from 5 to 30,000 acres in Galveston County. It is estimated to have invaded over 340,000 acres in southeast Texas.

What does it look like?

Chinese tallow tree is a deciduous tree that can grow to 60 feet in height with a trunk as wide as 3 feet in diameter. Leaves are heart-shaped, with dangling yellow-colored flower spikes yielding small clusters of three-lobed fruit that split to reveal popcorn-like seeds in fall/winter. Seeds may develop on trees as young as three years old.



Image: bugwood.org

What are the impacts?

Chinese tallow tree will transform the landscape into monospecific (single species) tallow forests, altering light availability for native species and eventually shading out all competition. Fallen tallow leaves contain allelopathic toxins that create unfavorable soil conditions for the growth of other species. Without management, Chinese tallow trees outcompete native plant species and reduce habitat for wildlife as well as reduce forage areas for livestock.

Sap from the species is known to cause skin irritation and diarrhea in humans. Care should be taken when handling and removing vegetative material.

For more information or to become involved in stopping invasive species in Texas, visit www.texasinvasives.org.

How can you prevent the spread?

Chinese tallow trees were introduced to the United States in an attempt to establish a soap-making industry and as a landscape ornamental. However due its damaging effect on the environment, this species is now on the Texas Department of Agriculture's noxious weed list. The importation, sale, and distribution of the species is prohibited. Additionally, homeowners with this tree are encouraged to control and remove the species. Birds and water flow are primarily responsible for the dispersal and spread of this invasive plant, although it propagates through cuttings, stumps and roots.

How can it be controlled?

Small Chinese tallow tree seedlings can be controlled by digging or pulling them out of the ground. When digging or pulling, make sure to remove as much root as possible to prevent resprouting. Be aware that pulling and digging creates ideal conditions for seed germination, so these sites will need to be carefully monitored for new growth.

Larger trees are most effectively controlled with an herbicide treatment. The method may consist of a foliar spray application, or a basal bark/cut stump treatment. These methods are safe and effective if used correctly. It is illegal to use herbicide in a manner inconsistent with the product's label. Carefully read and follow the instructions. If you need assistance, contact your local Texas A&M Forest Service Office or Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office.