

Tree of Heaven *Ailanthus altissima*

Somerville Invasive Plant Removal Guide

Reasons to Remove Tree of Heaven

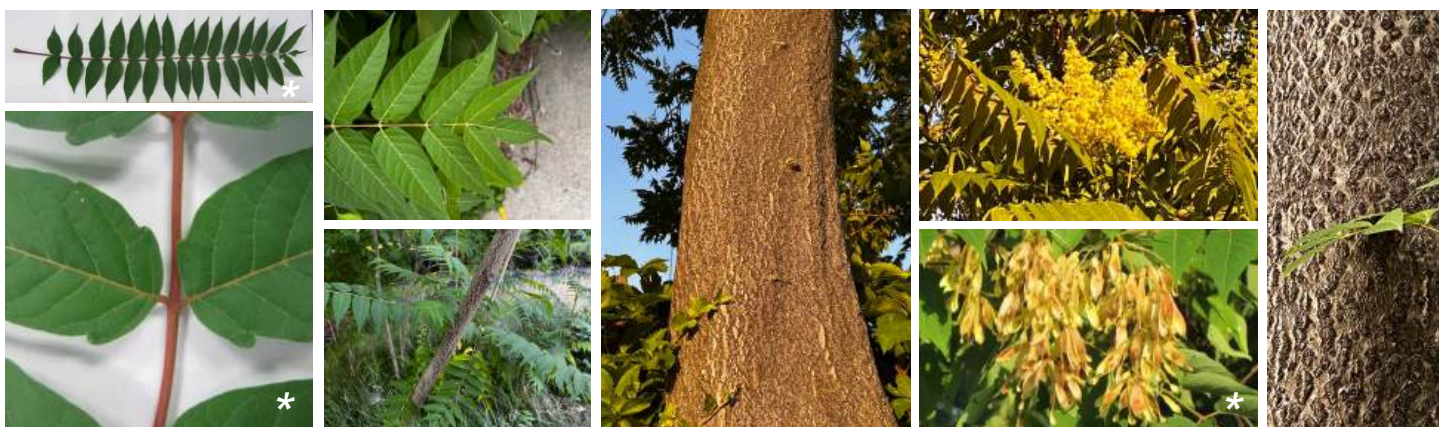
- Rapidly grows large trees and thickets (80 ft. tall, 6 ft. diameter) with root suckers that can extend 50 ft. from the mother tree
- Creates hazards with weak, falling limbs
- Damages infrastructure with its roots
- Releases allelopathic toxin to destroy vegetation
- Produces overwhelming amount of samaras (up to 3,000) that compete with native plants
- Degrades wildlife habitat: Native insects (base of food chain particularly birds) do not feed on tree of heaven
- Hosts the highly destructive **Spotted Lanternfly** that aggressively eats agriculture (fruit, hardwood, and nursery industries)



Growth Example

How to identify Tree of Heaven

smooth leaf with 1-2 divots at base, yellow samaras, cantaloupe bark, yellow fall leaves



*Photo credit: Dave Jackson

How to identify native look-alikes

Staghorn Sumac

serrated leaf, red fruit, red leaves in fall



Black Walnut

serrated leaf, nut seeds



Photos: A Bernard unless otherwise cited



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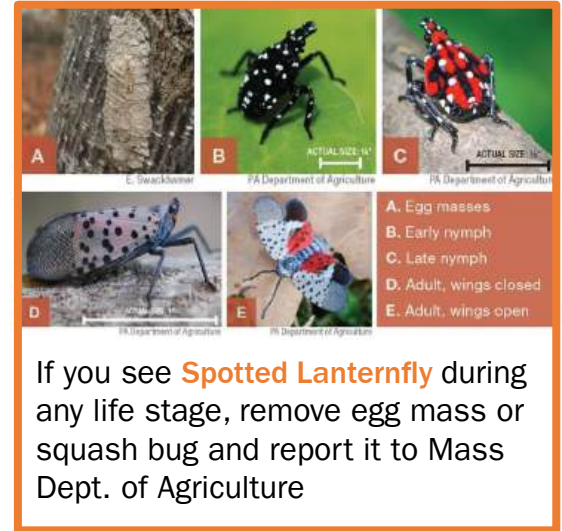
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When you may be able to pull by hand

- You are sure the growth is a seedling and not a root sucker. *Warning: Cutting suckers can lead to prolific growth of allelopathic roots.*
- You can easily tug and all roots come out
- Low number of trees and you can dig out all roots
- Tip: Remove after rain when roots come out easier

When herbicide is typically suggested

- Roots break instead of coming out when tugged
- There is a trunk that thickens each year
- Growth in a thicket
- A large “mother” tree of heaven is nearby
- Spotted lantern flies are seen on tree



Herbicide tips

- **Use caution!** Read the purchased herbicide safety guidance before using.
- **Refer to Penn State Extension** for recommendations and watch 6 minute video of each application method: <https://extension.psu.edu/tree-of-heaven-control-strategies/>
- **Timing: Apply between July and onset of fall color.** Applying outside this window only affects above-ground growth, not roots.
- **Multi year follow up is critical**
- **Pick a non-windy day to spray**

Sample Herbicide Shopping List

With any herbicide method:

- PPE: mask, long sleeve, glasses, non-cloth gloves
- Flags to keep people and pets away for 48 hours

For foliar leaf (for small growth) and “hack and squirt” injections (for large trees):

- Undiluted glyphosate or triclopyr (mix with water)
- Hatchet or knife for large tree
- Hired tree cutting 30 days after treating for large trees

For basal bark (medium trees):

- Triclopyr ester mixed in basal oil
- Sponges or foam brushes

Disclaimer: Advice herein is based on cited guidance and/or knowledge of common practices. Decisions to use herbicides should be done with caution, as a last resort, only on your personal property and in accordance with herbicide user / safety guidance.

Learn more about the Somerville Urban Forestry Committee:

tinyurl.com/somervilleufc

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