

## INVASIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

# ***Tree of “Heaven”? Or the other place?***

*From Brodhead Watershed Association*

Tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*, right) first came to the United States in the 1700s. Like many noxious plants that become invasive, it was intentionally introduced. Starting as an urban street tree around Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., it is now classified as a “noxious weed,” and has invaded agricultural and rural areas, including right here in Barrett, Paradise and surrounding areas.



### **WHY IT SHOULD BE REMOVED**

Tree-of-heaven is the preferred host tree for spotted lantern fly (*below*), a destructive pest that has recently invaded our area. Local gardeners have spotted them — so removing tree-of-heaven will help control spotted lantern fly. However, as you’ll see below, to eradicate the trees takes specific steps. **Simply cutting the tree will cause it to spread.** The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture DOES NOT RECOMMEND TREE OF HEAVEN REMOVAL UNLESS ACCOMPANIED WITH AN HERBICIDE APPLICATION.

### **IDENTIFYING TREE-OF-HEAVEN**

Tree-of-heaven grows incredibly fast and can grow to 80 to 100 feet tall and up to 6 feet in diameter. Biochemicals in its leaves, roots and bark can prevent other plants from taking root. And the female trees can produce more than 300,000 seeds annually!

It is often confused with staghorn sumac, black walnut and hickory. The compound leaves are similar — but the leaves of the natives all have serrated edges. Every part of the tree-of-heaven – from leaves and bark to roots – gives off a strong, offensive stink when crushed.

### **HOW TO CONTROL THIS NOXIOUS PLANT**

To control tree-of-heaven, target the roots with systemic herbicides applied from July to when fall color first starts. However, don’t cut the tree and paint the stump with herbicide — that just encourages the roots to send up suckers.



Herbicides applied to foliage, bark, or “frill cuts” on the stem are effective controls. Effective herbicides for tree-of-heaven include dicamba, glyphosate, imazapyr, metsulfuron methyl, and triclopyr. You will need to follow up the second year to make sure the plant doesn’t send up new growth. Cutting or mowing don’t work — the cut trees will send up huge numbers of sprouts. If a dangerous tree must be removed, first treat it with herbicide, give the herbicide 30 days to start working, then cut.

Tree-of-heaven is a prolific pollen-producer causing allergies for many, and some people are sensitive to the sap and even crushed leaves. If you are removing a large stand, wear long sleeves, long pants, and gloves.

For information, check with local garden centers or Penn State Extension <https://extension.psu.edu/tree-of-heaven> and the PA Department of Agriculture [https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Plants\\_Land\\_Water/PlantIndustry/Entomology/spotted\\_lanternfly/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Plants_Land_Water/PlantIndustry/Entomology/spotted_lanternfly/Pages/default.aspx)