



# Tree of Heaven

O & T Guide W-18

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Tree of heaven, *Ailanthus altissima*, is a deciduous tree that has distinct yellow or red seed pods that grow in bunches, and leaves with small, circular glands on the undersides; its leaves have a skunky odor when crushed. The plant can tolerate shade, pollution, and harsh soil conditions. It is also known as ailanthus, copal tree, and varnish tree.

Tree of heaven normally has a single, erect trunk that can grow up to 65 ft. tall. Small trees have smooth, gray-brown bark while larger trees have rough bark with diamond shaped fissures. The plant's leaves are 1-3 ft. long and are divided into 10-22 pairs of opposite leaflets with one terminal leaflet. Each leaflet is 3-5 in. long, lance-shaped, with mostly smooth edges except for 2-4 rounded teeth at the base. These rounded teeth often have small, circular glands on the undersides. The leaves have a skunky odor when crushed.

The flowers develop in bunches 4-8 in. long. They are very small, greenish-yellow or white, with five petals. The plant's seed pods are 1-2 in. long by 0.5 in. wide, flat, and constrict around a single seed. The pods are straw-colored to reddish-brown in color and grow in bunches. Tree of heaven grows from a taproot with shallow, creeping perennial lateral roots. It reproduces through seed and vegetatively through the root crown and lateral roots.





Management Do's and Don'ts:

- Prevention and maintenance of a healthy plant community are the best management methods
- Physical removal is effective only if root crown and creeping lateral roots are removed
- Herbicides are effective