

TREE OF HEAVEN

(Ailanthus altissima)

Jackie Miles/Max Campbell



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Why is tree of heaven a weed?

- Invades native dry forest and woodland
- Able to produce large numbers of suckers up to 30m from the parent plant
- Winged seed is spread on the wind, enabling plants to establish in areas other than original planting sites

Description

Plant: fast-growing deciduous tree to 20m high with smooth, grey-brown bark with pale streaks

Leaves: large, compound (made up of two or more leaflets attached to the leaf stalk, similar to ferns/some wattles), up to 1m long, with many pointed leaflets in opposite pairs, each up to 12cm long, turn red in autumn before dropping. There is a gland on a small lobe near the base of each leaflet and when crushed leaves have an unpleasant smell

Seeds: large, winged, red. Technically called 'samaras' but otherwise known as helicopter seeds due to the way they rotate when falling

Flowers: small, white, in clusters at branch ends

Dispersal via

- Humans - planted as ornamental trees
- Regeneration via suckering from the roots
- Regrowth from cut stumps - hence the importance of chemicals in control methods
- The winged seed is carried long distances on the wind and can spread the plant into areas far from its original planting
- Carried in water

Status

Tree of heaven is listed as a class 4 noxious weed in the Queanbeyan Council jurisdiction. The growth and spread of the plant must be controlled in accordance with local management plans published by each local council. It is suggested that tree of heaven should be dealt with in a similar manner if discovered in the Palerang or Cooma-Monaro Council areas.

In the ACT, tree of heaven is a class 4 Pest Plant whose supply is prohibited.

Look-alikes

In the Molonglo catchment, there are no native species which could be confused with tree of heaven. The weeds **false acacia** (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) and **honey locust** (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) have a similar leaf structure and could be mistaken for tree of heaven however both these trees have furrowed bark, rounded rather than pointed leaves and thorns on the stems. False acacia has sprays of attractive cream pea-flowers followed by small thin-textured flat seed pods and honey locust pods are up to 30cm long, and leathery in texture. Both species also reproduce by suckering. See the false acacia sheet for more information.

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Weed: false acacia (or black locust)

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Weed: honey locust

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Weed: honey locust

Control methods

For advice on what time of year to implement the following management options, see the Molonglo Catchment Weed Control Calendar.

Stem injection and cut and paint application methods are suitable however may need to be repeated to kill regrowth. Smaller plants can be sprayed. Do not cut trees down without applying herbicide to the stump or extensive suckering will result. Seek advice on chemical application from your Council Weeds Officer or local 'bush friendly' nursery. Always use chemicals as directed on the label.

Contact with tree of heaven bark and leaves may cause dermatitis in some people.