INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES IN ILLINOIS HABITATS - Woodlands: Forests, Timber, Windbreaks...

Tree-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

**NATIVE TO:** Asia

**CURRENT DISTRIBUTION IN ILLINOIS:** Extensively widespread throughout the state.

**IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS:** Deciduous tree up to 80’ tall. Large pinnately compound leaves up to 3 ft long with 11 to 30 lance-shaped leaflets. Unpleasant fragrance reminiscent of diesel fluid.

**IMPORTANCE:** Rapidly spreads by roots and seeds, can quickly turn from a few saplings to widespread and homogenous colonies. Can grow 5+ ft per year. Chemicals found in sap that can cause severe headaches, nausea, and possible heart problems.

**HABITAT:** Forests, meadows, disturbed areas, roadsides, fencerows.

**MANAGEMENT:** Cutting trees encourages roots to sprout. Saplings can be hand pulled. Cutting and stump spaying with a systemic herbicide or basal spray with a penetrating oil useful.

---

Above: Typical leaf. Can be up to 3 ft long. Right: Can form dense and homogenous colonies as it spreads by its roots and numerous seeds.

---

ILLINOIS COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL PEST SURVEY

Photo Credits: Illinois Natural History Survey. Top photo: Kelly Estes, photo to right: Kelly Estes.