

# KENTUCKY'S LEAST WANTED! PLANT 2015

## MIMOSA or SILKTREE

*Albizia julibrissin*



Mimosa or silktree (*Albizia julibrissin*) is known for its abundant pink and white flowers and fine, fern-like foliage. The tree can reach 35-40 feet and may have one or many trunks. The crown is somewhat flattened to arched. The pompon-like flowers, borne in terminal clusters, are produced from mid-June to early August. Each flower produces a flat, bean-like pod up to 8 inches long, with 6-12 seeds. A single tree may produce 10,000 or more seeds each year. Widely planted for years, cold weather kept the trees small and limited seed production and successful germination. Shorter, warmer winters have allowed trees to get bigger and more seeds to ripen and germinate. Mimosa is now spreading along roads and into vacant lots, fields and forest edges particularly in western, central, and southern Kentucky. The dense foliage shades out native vegetation. Trees also root sucker, making control more difficult.

## NATIVE ALTERNATIVES



**ALTERNATE-LEAF DOGWOOD (*Cornus alternifolia*)** is small deciduous tree native to the eastern U.S. Growing to 25 feet with wide spreading branches, it prefers part shade and rich soils. In spring, wide, flat-topped clusters of small, white flowers attract a variety of pollinators. Dark blue fruit on red peduncles follows in late summer and provides food for many birds and small mammals. It is also a host plant for the spring azure butterfly. With its striking form, it makes a great specimen tree for the garden, providing interest throughout the seasons.



**RED BUCKEYE (*Aesculus pavia*)** is a small, slow growing buckeye with striking red flowers. Native to the southeast and possibly along the Ohio River, this small tree will grow in a variety of soils in moderate shade to full sun. The tree will eventually reach 15-25 feet tall. Terminal 4-7 inch clusters of red flowers are produced April-May on trees as small as 3 feet tall. Leaves are about 7 inches long and wide, each with 5 leaflets. The tree will begin producing fruit and chestnut brown seeds at about 4 feet tall. Several cultivars are available in the nursery trade. Hummingbirds will visit the flowers.



**AMERICAN WITCH-HAZEL (*Hamamelis virginiana*)** is a large, deciduous shrub or small tree that can reach heights of 15-20 feet with an equal spread. Clusters of small, yellow flowers appear in autumn; each flower has four very narrow, wrinkled, strap-like petals. In autumn, its 3-6 inch leaves turn yellow. One of three North American species, American witch-hazel is native throughout the eastern U.S. where it commonly grows in shade with moist soils. It is very tolerant of different soil conditions and grows well in full sun. Witch-hazel is well-known for its astringent properties.

To heighten awareness of invasive plants that threaten Kentucky's native biodiversity, a Least Wanted plant will be featured in the spring of each year with suggested alternatives.

PROMOTING ALTERNATIVES  
TO INVASIVE LANDSCAPE PLANTS

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