

GREEN GONE BAD

FEATURED ORNAMENTAL PLANT: *TRIADICA SEBIFERA* (CHINESE TALLOW TREE)

Some exotic ornamental plants behave badly when they escape from the place they are planted. Infestations of these plants have negative impacts on nature. One of these plants is *Triadica sebifera*; common name: Chinese Tallow Tree.



Triadica sebifera is a deciduous, small to medium sized tree in the family Euphorbiaceae (Spurge). The native range of *Triadica sebifera* is China where it has been cultivated for 14 centuries, also native to Taiwan and Northern Vietnam. It was introduced in 1776 by Benjamin Franklin, and was promoted in the Gulf States for soap production by the Foreign Plant Introduction Division of the USDA in the early 1900's. It has also been planted extensively as an ornamental for its attractive fall foliage, unique fruit and leaves. It is considered invasive throughout the southeastern US with its primary distribution throughout the coastal plain from central North Carolina to eastern Texas. Recently escaped populations have been discovered in Kentucky, Tennessee and California.



Triadica sebifera is a single trunk or occasionally multi-stemmed tree which can reach heights of 60 feet. The leaves are simple, alternate and are heart-shaped to rhombic with a truncate base and entire margins. Fall foliage can range from yellow to orange to red-purple. It flowers in long slender spikes, producing 3-valved capsules that open exposing 3 dull-white, waxy, persistent seeds. The petioles produce a milky sap when broken.



The problem with *Triadica sebifera* is that it is an aggressive invader with rapid growth, reaches sexual maturity in three years, and is a heavy seeder with a persistent seed bank. It can invade old fields, coastal tall grass prairies, and bottomland hardwood forests. It is adapted to a wide range of ecological conditions including a tolerance to shade, flooding, drought and saline soils.



It may not be widely known among horticulturalists and landscapers that this plant can be harmful to natural habitats. Please consider removing this species from your inventory. There are many native trees that can be sold and planted in its place. These include *Cercis canadensis* (eastern redbud), *Carpinus caroliniana* (American hornbeam), *Ostrya virginiana* (hophornbeam), *Tilia americana* (American basswood), *Catalpa bignonioides* (southern catalpa), or *Amelanchier arborea* (downy serviceberry).

Please visit <http://www.invasive.org/browse/subinfo.cfm?sub=3079> for more information.

<http://www.se-eppc.org/southcarolina/>



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