

Tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)



ORIGIN: East Asia

INTRODUCED TO EUROPE: 1751

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS: A deciduous tree with a sparse, rounded crown and flat, strong trunk that grows up to 25 m in height. Its bark is thin and moderately smooth with white longitudinal cracks. The leaves are dark green above and light green below. They are arranged in a spiral 30-90 cm long made up of 11-25 leaflets that are wide, stalked, and oblong-elliptic. The pale yellow flowers are joined in panicle inflorescences. The fruits are 3-4 cm long samara that are a light reddish brown and grow in clusters.

ECOLOGY/ HABITAT: Optimal growing conditions are deep and fresh soils. It can also grow on moderately rocky or sandy soils and tolerates long-term drought and city pollution, but avoids humid and compact soils. Young plants are sensitive to extreme cold, while older plants tolerate temperatures down to -30°C. The tree is known as a heliophyte and likes warm climates.

STATUS: The species occurs mainly in southern and central Europe and is widespread especially in the Mediterranean region. There are records from the following European countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, France (incl. Corsica), Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy (incl. Sardinia, Sicily), Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal (incl. Azores, Madeira), Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain (incl. Balearic Islands, Canary Islands), Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

SIMILAR TREES: *Pterocarya fraxinifolia*, *Rhus typhina*, *Fraxinus excelsior*