

# Weed of The Week

2-1-2021

## Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

The origination of this week's weed of the week might not be as specific as the name defines. Most people do not associate this woody species with heaven. Tree of Heaven originated in China and brought to the U.S.A in the early 1700's as an ornamental. As many invasive species it escaped into nature and can be found growing throughout the state of Ohio but more commonly in the southern region of Ohio. This perennial tree like species grows very fast but has a very short life span ranging from 30-40 years. Tree of Heaven produces compound leaves that can grow to lengths of 5 feet long and when crushed will produce a very foul odor. Reproduction of this species can be from both seed and roots, this makes it very hard to control allowing it to spread and take over forest areas, waist areas, and idle fields at a quick pace. Tree of Heaven can reach heights of 100' tall but this is very rare due to their short life cycle. The bark of this tree is very thin and grey to dark brown in color. Being part of the Ginkgo family, Tree of Heaven shares many characteristics such as having two different plants (male and female) when the pollination occurs the plant will produce a very foul odor. Some people will have allergic reactions when exposed to the pollen. This reaction is very similar to poison ivy. Controlling this weed is not for the faint of heart, it takes time and persistence, mechanical removal by digging and moving can be successful in species with a trunk size 8 inches or less. If the plant is larger, trunk basal spraying is more ideal, triclopyr, stalker, and chopper are all good products to use on 12-18-inch diameter trees.

