



Tree-of-Heaven *Ailanthus altissima*

Location: The tree of heaven is most common in the piedmont and mountain regions of NC but can also be found on the coastal plain.

Bark: The bark is gray and smooth that cracks as it ages.

Leaves: Alternate, compound leaves are arranged along the leaf stem with 10 to 40 leaflets and a terminal leaflet at the end. Each leaflet has 1 to 3 teeth on each side close to the base. A yellow dye is obtained from the leaves. When the leaves are crushed it smells like burnt peanut butter.

Flowers: Greenish-yellow flowers appear on 20 inch long terminal clusters.

Fruit: The seeds are enclosed in a papery wing-like cover called a samara. Samaras are slightly twisted or curled.

Wood Type: Hardwood. Ranges from pale yellow to light brown.

Mature Height: 65 to 100 feet

Mature Diameter: 2 to 3 feet

Uses: Carpentry, turnery (products made with a lathe), pulp for paper making.

Interesting fact: It is often confused with sumac and black walnut. The dried bark from the trunk and roots are sometimes used in folk medicine to treat diarrhea, asthma, cramps, epilepsy, fast heart rate, tapeworm and other conditions but there is no good scientific evidence to support these uses. The roots are poisonous. Used as an insecticide.

Reference: Smith, Cherri. 2008. Invasive Exotic Plants of North Carolina. N.C. Department of Transportation. Raleigh, NC.