

Invaders of Texas

a Citizen Science program of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Invasive Species Field ID

Melia azedarach

Family: Meliaceae (Mahogany Family)

Common Name(s): chinaberry, Chinaberry tree, Chinaberrytree, Indian lilac, lelah, paraiso, pride of India, white cedar

USDA Plants: **MEAZ**

Habit: Tree, Shrub



Description: Deciduous tree to 50 feet (15 m) in height and 2 feet (60 cm) in diameter, much branched with multiple boles, lacy dark-green leaves having a musky odor, and clusters of lavender flowers in spring yielding persistent, poisonous yellow berries.

History: Introduced in the mid-1800s from Asia. Widely planted as a traditional ornamental around homesites. Extracts potentially useful for natural pesticides.

Biology & Spread: Reproduces on-site primarily from root sprouts, and over longer distances via bird-dispersed seeds. Reproductively mature when it reaches the size of a shrub. Flowers in the spring, fruits in the summer. Fruit remain on the tree past leaf fall.

Ecological Threat: Chinaberry outcompetes native vegetation due to its high relative resistance to insects and pathogens. Its leaf litter raises soil pH, thus altering soil conditions for native plants and seed germination. Chinaberry is a very fast growing tree that reaches 18 - 24 feet in height in 4 - 5 years. May reach 50 - 60 feet in total height.

Resembles/Alternatives: Red mulberry (*Morus rubra*), Mexican plum (*Prunus mexicana*), Wax myrtle (*Morella cerifera*)

Management: The most effective chemical controls are cut-stump and basal bark applications of triclopyr herbicides. Cut trees left untreated will grow back with several branches emanating from a single stump. Removal of seedlings must include the entire root system.

US Habitat: Common on roadsides, at forest margins, and around old homesites but rare at high elevations. Semishade tolerant. Forms colonies from root sprouts or sprouts from root collars, and spreads by bird-dispersed abundant seeds.

