

SACRAMENTO WEED WARRIORS - How are we removing Chinese Tallow?

Sacramento Weed Warriors conducts weed removal work groups on the first Saturday of every month. Volunteers of all ages are encouraged to participate and enjoy a morning improving the habitat along our rivers and creeks.

SWW provides the necessary hand tools, such as loppers, tree saws, and gloves. Volunteers also receive training and supervision. Following training, volunteers remove resprouting saplings and new seedlings. A sustained community stewardship effort is essential for preventing the reestablishment of mature populations of this highly invasive tree.

Chinese tallow is not easy to remove. Volunteers typically cut back large trees, leaving a short stump which is treated with a selective herbicide by a certified applicator. Smaller saplings are removed with hand tools such as weed wrenches and shovels. Herbicide can also be applied directly to the lower bark and the tree can be removed once it has died.

SWW team leaders will collaborate with the American River Parkway Foundation to train Adopt a Mile Stewards to recognize and remove new seedlings in targeted areas where mature trees have previously been removed. Removal is done carefully to ensure that the entire root system is removed; otherwise new sprouts can emerge to produce mature trees.

What can YOU do?

- **Report Chinese tallow sightings to us**
If you see Chinese tallow growing along a waterway, or on private property, in the Sacramento area, please contact us. SWW will contact the land owner or appropriate government agency to offer to remove the tree.
- **Join a Sacramento Weed Warriors work group**
We conduct a community work group on the first Saturday of every month. Chinese tallow is one of the top-priority invasive species being removed from the American River Parkway and along waterways throughout the Sacramento region. More information about Sacramento Weed Warriors is available online at www.sacvalleycnps.org.

How to contact us

For more information, please contact:

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Sacramento Weed Warriors (SWW) is a community stewardship initiative of the California Native Plant Society-Sacramento Valley Chapter. Many local organizations, including the American River Parkway Foundation and the Sacramento Urban Creeks Council, provide support. SWW is currently receiving funding to implement the Community Stewardship Component of the American River Parkway-Invasive Plant Management Project (ARP-IPMP). During Phase 1 of this long term project, IPMP professional crews and SWW volunteers are removing 5 invasive plant species located on 653 acres in the Parkway. On a long term basis, SWW will be responsible for monitoring more than 800 acres to be sure that new plants are treated or removed before more seeds are produced.

The American River Parkway-Invasive Plant Management Project is funded by grants from the California Wildlife Conservation Board, California Department of Transportation, and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency. The project is administered by the Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks, Recreation and Open Space. Loran May and Associates is the project manager.



An environmental stewardship project of the California Native Plant Society-Sacramento Valley Chapter

Chinese Tallow

(Sapium sebiferum)

Popcorn Tree



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Invasive Weed Fact Sheet

Special thanks to Supriya Mody for the graphic design.

What is Chinese Tallow?

- Chinese tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*), also known as popcorn tree or Florida aspen, is a popular ornamental tree that can grow to 40 feet in height.
- It is a deciduous tree, with oval pointed leaves resembling those of cottonwood trees.
- Young red-tipped leaves turn pink, orange, or purplish in the fall.
- Clusters of small yellow flowers (also called catkins) produce white popcorn-like seeds, suggesting the common name - popcorn tree.
- Fruit-bearing trees can produce more than 100,000 seeds annually.
- Chinese tallow has a milky white sap that is sticky and can irritate skin.
- The bark of Chinese tallow is mostly smooth and is brownish grey in color.



How does it spread?

- In California, the seeds are spread by birds and can travel long distances in flowing water.
- Young saplings begin producing thousands of seeds after reaching three years in age.
- Trees can also sprout new shoots from their roots and trunks.
- Biological controls, so as the use of insects or other pests from its native environment, are not available for Chinese tallow at this time.

Why is it a problem?

- Chinese tallow thrives in river corridors and sandbars and is capable of rapidly replacing existing native vegetation.
- Tallow is toxic to humans and wildlife. Its leaves and fruit are toxic to cattle (It is a member of the Euphorbia family of plants which includes many other toxic or unpalatable plants).
- Chinese tallow trees produce tannins that can alter soil chemistry, which can limit the establishment of native plant seedlings.
- Ecologists believe that Chinese tallow poses a significant threat to the biological diversity found within riparian habitats (the native habitat found along the edge of waterways).

Where does it come from?

- Chinese tallow is native to China. It was introduced into the United States in Charleston, South Carolina in the late 1700s.
- It is reported that Chinese tallow was imported by Benjamin Franklin who used its waxy tallow in soaps and candles.
- It has since spread to every coastal state from North Carolina to Texas and inland to Arkansas. It is now listed as a significant pest plant in Florida, Texas, and the Carolinas.
- It was first reported in the wild in California along the American River Parkway, and infests wetlands in Yolo County.
- It is widely used as a horticultural plant by landscapers and is still sold in nurseries in California.