Princess Tree
(Paulownia tomentosa)

Key ID Features

Leaves: Opposite, large, heart-shaped leaves with pubescence on both sides. The underside of the leaf is pale. Young leaves can grow in a three leaf “whorl” pattern.

Flowers: Pink or pale violet flowers with dark spots or yellow stripes appear in the spring in large upright clusters. They have an attractive vanilla scent and resemble foxglove.

Fruit: Seeds are stored in a 1"-1.5" woody seed pod which can contain thousands of small, winged seeds.

Stem: Young stems are a gray/silver with lenticels. Mature bark is a thin grayish brown with fissures and lenticels.

Life Cycle: The princess tree can reproduce from seed or from root sprouts; the latter can grow to over 15 ft. in a single season. The root branches are shallow and horizontal without a strong taproot. Seed-forming pollen is fully developed before the onset of winter, and in spring the flowers are pollinated by insects. Seeds germinate within a few days on suitable substrate; seedlings grow quickly and flower in 8-10 years. Mature trees are often structurally unsound and rarely live more than 70 years.

The Impact

The princess tree is an opportunistic species that thrives in disturbed areas where it can outcompete local vegetation due to its fast-growing nature. This can result in monocultures of the Princess tree which leaves no room for native plants/trees that would promote biodiversity and a wider range of wildlife.

Quick Facts

Plant Family: Figwort family (Scrophulariaceae)

Origin: Native to China, first introduced into the United States as an ornamental in 1840.

Habitat: Man-made or disturbed habitats, forest edges, forests.

Present in Vermont?: Yes


Photo by massaudubon

Common Look-alike

Northern Catalpa *(Catalpa speciosa)*

Distinguishing features: Whorled leaf arrangement, stem is not hollow, leaves are less hairy.

Native Plant Alternatives

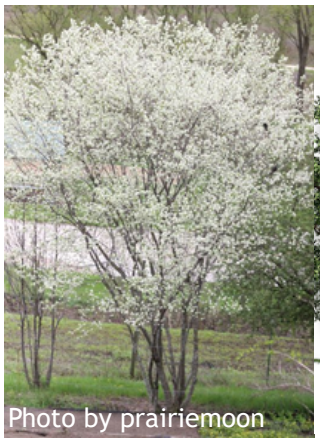
Photo by prairiemoon

Downy Serviceberry *(Amelanchier arborea)*

Serviceberry is a vital shrub to wildlife, providing edible berries, habitat, and erosion control.

Basswood *(Tilia americana)*

Basswood is quick growing and offers food, shelter and abundant nectar for pollinators.

Control Information

To learn more about identification & control options, check out the Gallery of Land Invasives on ***VTinvasives.org*** and these additional resources:

Invasive.org, invasive-species.extension.org

References: Appalachian Ohio Weeds, UMD Extension, USDA National Invasive Species Information Center

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