**Tree of Heaven**

**Segment for Week of Nov. 22, 2021**

This is Steve Ruleson bringing you information on shore friendly living and gardening from the Eastern Shore Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension. From my perch near the mouth of Occohannock Creek, I recorded xxx rain last week.

Thanks for tuning in as I present information on tree of heaven, an invasive species.

Ailanthus, also known as tree-of-heaven and paradise-tree, is a major nuisance to foresters, farmers, and homeowners alike. Native to China, the tree was introduced to the Eastern United States in the late 1700’s and has been planted as an urban street tree. Its prolific seeding, ability to sprout from roots and stumps, rapid growth, and ability to grow just about anywhere, make it a serious competitor and threat to native species and cultivated crops.

Ailanthus is also allelopathic, producing substances that are toxic to, and inhibit the growth of, neighboring plants. Prolific seeding and rapid growth allow Ailanthus seedlings to become a nuisance, even in regularly maintained areas, like urban sidewalks.

The tree of heaven can be confused with native sumacs but can usually be distinguished by sumac’s small, red, fuzzy fruit that persists throughout the winter. Black walnut is also sometimes mistaken for ailanthus due to its compound leaves and large shield-shaped leaf scars. Ailanthus’s spongy pith and unpleasant odor, compared to walnut’s chambered pith and citrussy scent should help distinguish between these trees. Control Cutting alone will not kill ailanthus, but instead cause it to re-sprout vigorously. Cutting must be combined with chemical control unless the entire root system is excavated, which usually is not feasible. Triclopyr has been verified to provide effective control of ailanthus through basal, foliar, and cut-stump applications.

If you see or suspect a tree of heaven on your property, give your County Agent a call. Here on the Eastern Shore, call 757-678-7946 or 757-787-1361.

Have you ever wanted to become a Master Gardener? Now is the time! The next MG training is scheduled to start January 12, 2022.  Please note that applications must be received by December 30, 2021 in order to complete the new requirement of needing a background check completed before start of the class.  The cost for the class is $100 and scholarships are available. For more information please contact Christine Williams, clwil20@gmail.com, or the Accomack County Extension Office.

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