

Tree-of-Heaven

Species Description

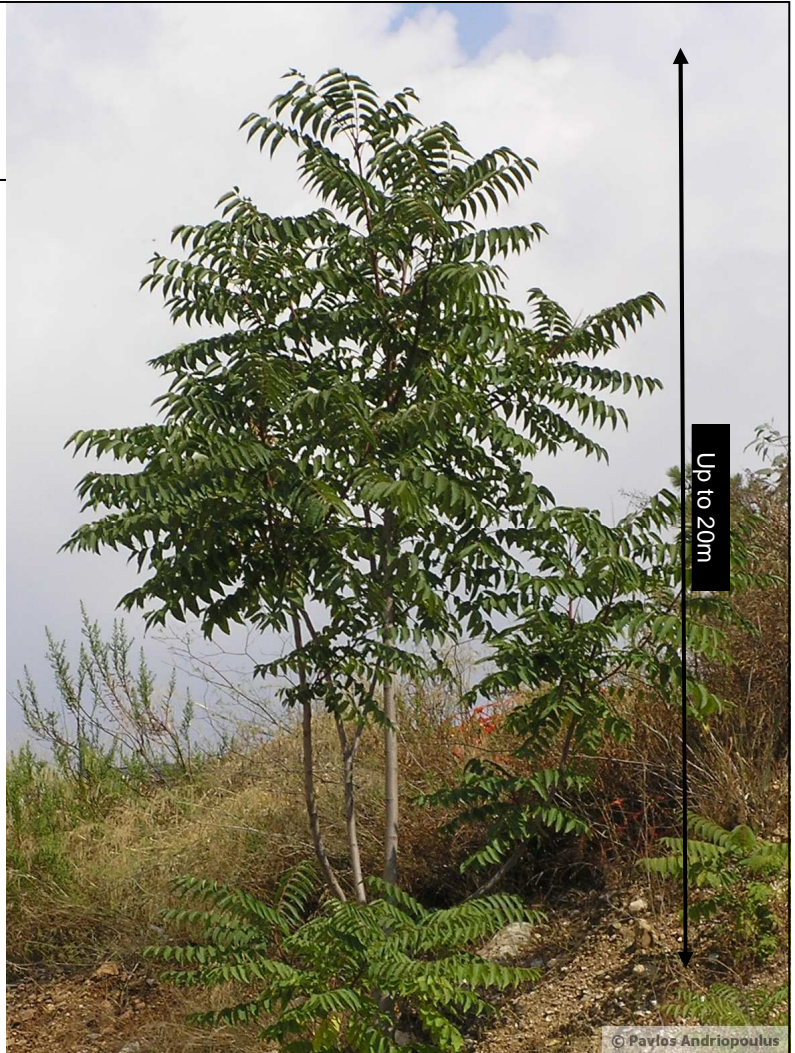
Scientific name: *Ailanthus altissima*
AKA: Chinese Sumac, Stinking Sumac
Native to: China and north Vietnam
Habitat: Roadsides, disturbed ground

A deciduous tree with large pinnate leaves, it resembles an ash, sumac or walnut tree. Less hairy than sumac, it has larger, more pinnate leaves than ash or walnut, with 11-25 pairs of leaflets, each 7-12cm long. Unlike ash and walnut, it produces abundant sprouts from the roots. Broken twigs have a distinctive unpleasant smell.

Flowers in July. Flowers are in stalked clusters and are greenish, with 5 petals.

It forms dense thickets by suckering, and suppresses other plant species. Its winged seeds are dispersed up to 100m by wind. Suckers may appear up to 15m from existing stems.

Mainly in urban areas, especially near parks, gardens and roadsides and in London along railways. It is also planted in parkland in the countryside, e.g. in the grounds and parks of country houses. Forms thickets in parks, gardens and urban waste land.



Key ID Features

Winged seeds (rather like sycamore seeds), reddish in colour at first



Leaves are alternate and pinnate

Bark is smooth and grey



The tree is strongly scented

Flowers in stalked clusters are greenish, with 5 petals