

Ailanthus (*Ailanthus altissima*)

Ailanthus, commonly known as “tree of heaven” is a rapidly growing deciduous tree native to both northeast and central China, as well as Taiwan. It was first introduced into the United States in the Philadelphia area in the late 1700s. Immigrants later introduced Ailanthus to the West Coast in the 1850s.

Ailanthus has rapid growth and can grow up to 80’ tall and 6’ in diameter. The bark is smooth and changes from brownish-green to light brown or gray as it ages. It was initially valued as an ornamental tree as it could grow in a number of site conditions and even with poor soils and air quality. However, it has lost popularity due to its foul odor and “weedy nature” and is now considered an invasive plant.

Ailanthus is dioecious, meaning a tree is either male or female, and typically grows in dense colonies. All trees in a single colony are the same sex. Female trees are prolific seeders with the potential to produce more than 300,000 seeds annually.

This tree is identified on the New Albany Tree Walk for educational purposes only. Ailanthus should be considered an invasive species locally and should not be planted in a residential setting and will not be planted in our urban forest.