

Common Immigrants in the Texas Landscape

12 Non-native Plants Well Established in Texas



1. Chinese Tallow



2. Mimosa



3. English Ivy



4. Paulownia



5. Chinaberry



6. Chinese Privet



7. Chinese Wisteria



8. Bamboos



9. Non-native Pines



10. Japanese Honeysuckle



11. Russian Olive



12. Tree of Heaven

Description of Common Plant Immigrants in the Texas Landscape

1. **Chinese Tallow:** *Triadica sebifera*. Introduced from China in the 1700s as an ornamental and for its waxy seeds. A deciduous tree reaching 60 feet in height, it readily invades open land and has distinct heart-shaped, alternate leaves that display brilliant fall colors. Attractive white berries persist on the tree in the fall and winter. The sap is milky.
2. **Mimosa:** *Albizia julibrissin*. Brought from Asia in 1745 as an ornamental, mimosa is a deciduous tree with alternate, doubly compound leaves and showy, fragrant pink blossoms. Leguminous seedpods persist during winter. Leaves resemble those of honeylocust.
3. **English Ivy:** *Hedera helix*. Native to Europe, this woody, climbing vine with alternate, evergreen, dark green, waxy leaves is widely planted as an ornamental. It may grow as a ground cover or climb buildings and trees. The leaves have white veins with 3-5 pointed lobes and are toxic to humans if consumed.
4. **Paulownia:** *Paulownia tomentosa*. A popular ornamental tree brought from Asia in the early 1800s. A deciduous tree reaching a height of 60 feet, it has fuzzy, opposite, heart-shaped leaves that can be very large on young plants. Showy pale violet flowers appear in the spring before the leaves. Colonies form from root sprouts.
5. **Chinaberry:** *Melia azedarach*. Introduced from Asia in the mid-1800s as an ornamental tree. Dark green leaves are doubly compound, alternate, deciduous, and display bright yellow fall colors. Fruit is spherical, about ½" in diameter, yellow, persists on the tree in winter and is poisonous.
6. **Chinese Privet:** *Ligustrum sinense* (and others). Native to China and Europe and brought to the U.S. by the mid-1800s as ornamentals. Mostly evergreen, thicket-forming shrub having opposite, elliptical leaves with smooth margins. Fragrant, white flowers form in spring and produce clusters of dark purple berries by fall.
7. **Chinese Wisteria:** *Wisteria sinensis* (and others). Introduced from Asia in the early 1800s as an ornamental. Deciduous, high-climbing woody vine with alternate, compound leaves up to 16" long. Large, fragrant, showy lavender to purple flowers in spring. Seed pod is typical of legumes.
8. **Bamboo:** *Phyllostachys* and *Bambusa* spp. Native to Asia and widely planted as an ornamental and for fishing poles, this plant is a perennial grass forming jointed cane stems and reaching heights of 40 feet. Leaf blades are long and lanceolate with parallel veins and often are a golden yellow color. Dense thickets may form in pine understory in wet areas of East Texas.
9. **Non-native Pines:** Slash pine, *Pinus elliottii*, is native to the southern US east of the Mississippi River. This pine has been planted for timber production in East Texas for many years. It is highly susceptible to ice damage, fusiform rust, and a root disease. Trees and stands beyond about age 40 tend to decline. Needles and cones are larger than those of loblolly pine. Other non-native pine species commonly found in Texas are Afghan pine (*P. eldarica*) in Central and West Texas and Virginia pine (*P. virginiana*) in East Texas, both grown for landscape and Christmas trees.
10. **Japanese Honeysuckle:** *Lonicera japonica*. Introduced from Japan in the early 1800s for erosion control and as an ornamental, this plant is a semievergreen, woody vine with simple, opposite leaves and produces white to yellow (sometimes pink) fragrant flowers from April through September.
11. **Russian Olive:** *Eleagnus angustifolia*. Native to Europe and Asia, this deciduous, thorny tree was brought to the southeast US in the early 1900s as an ornamental. Leaves are simple, alternate, and have a silvery underside. Small white to yellow flowers appear in the spring followed by reddish seeds in late summer that resemble an olive.
12. **Tree of Heaven:** *Ailanthus altissima*. Native to China and brought to the US in the late 1700s as an ornamental, this deciduous tree has large (up to 3 feet), alternate, compound leaves that are dark green above and light green below. Showy spring (April – June) flowers have an odor similar to peanuts.

For detailed descriptions and photos, see James H. Miller's publication "Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests" at <http://www.invasive.org/eastern/srs/>.