

Management & Permits

It is important to consider that not all invasive trees cause problems. There is a right place for every tree; they may not cause problems if they are properly maintained and cared for, and their seedlings and suckers are contained.

If you do wish to remove a tree, it is important to determine if a permit is required. Permits are always required for street tree work, and may be required on private property.

Not sure if your tree is invasive or if you need a permit? Contact Urban Forestry with your property address and details of the tree by email to urbanforestry@cityofvancouver.us or by calling **360-487-8308**.



Wrong Tree, Wrong Spot

Vancouver Urban Forestry develops guidelines for planting quality trees in appropriate locations to maximize the benefits of our trees and to protect public and private infrastructure.

Unfortunately, invasive trees such as Tree of Heaven or Black locust seed themselves and thrive without care. These fast-growing invasive trees can grow and thrive in tight locations, and may quickly damage existing structures and invade our natural areas.



A Guide to Invasive Trees

in the City of Vancouver



Tree of Heaven
Ailanthus altissima

Some species of trees may thrive in locations which conflict with city infrastructure or private property. Learn how to identify common invasive trees and effective strategies for management.

Tree of Heaven

Ailanthus altissima

Tree of Heaven is a fast-growing tree reaching over 80 feet tall and is a prolific seeder that can quickly take over sites. Its root system is extensive and new sprouts have been known to cause damage to sewers and foundations. Because it is weak-wooded, it frequently suffers storm damage.



Tree of Heaven has a tropical appearance. The large leaves are 1-4 feet in length, and when crushed may smell like “burnt peanut butter”. The tree’s bark is smooth and grey. Seeds appear in large clusters.



Black locust

Robinia pseudoacacia

Black locust is a short-lived, but quickly growing tree reaching 100 feet in height. It is known to easily outcompete native trees, spreading quickly by root suckers and self seeding.



Black locust can be easily confused with the Honey Locust, which is a common city tree with no invasive or nuisance qualities. Make sure to consult a certified arborist.

Black Locust has pinnately compound leaves that have an odd number of leaflets with one leaflet at the tip. A pair of short, sharp spines occur where the leaf is attached to a zig-zag stem.

Its fragrant white flowers each have a yellow blotch on the uppermost petal, and occur in clusters that appear in May or June and develop into seed pods up to 4 inches long.



Black locust
Robinia pseudoacacia

Treatment & Control

Digging, Cutting, and Chemicals

Elimination of invasive trees requires hard work, due to their abundant seed production, extensive root systems, or prolific vegetative reproduction. Removed trees should be monitored and any new suckers or seedlings treated as soon as possible.

In addition to removal, establishing new quality replacement trees will help shade out and discourage establishment of invasives. Contact Urban Forestry for a list of quality trees.

Cutting alone is usually counter-productive because these trees respond by producing large numbers of sprouts and root suckers.

Digging up young seedlings may be effective. Take care to remove the entire plant including all roots and fragments, as these will likely be able to regrow.

Chemicals and herbicides are the most effective method to eliminate nuisance trees. Chemicals may be applied to the leaves or squirted into a hole drilled into the stump. Timing is important; Fall is usually the best time of year to apply chemicals. While it is easier to destroy the above ground portion of Tree of Heaven the root system must be killed to prevent the stump from sprouting and root suckering.

Always use caution when applying chemicals, and follow product label directions. This brochure is a starting point, and is not intended as instructional material for invasive removal.