

Brazilian Peppertree on Galveston Island: “The Next Chinese Tallow?”



Brazilian peppertree (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) is an invasive species that was brought to Texas as an ornamental plant from Brazil. The species has taken an aggressive hold in the Florida Everglades and is currently invading parts of California, Louisiana, and the lower Texas coast. Recently, Brazilian peppertree was found on Galveston Island and observed to have escaped from cultivation and invading native habitats. Without control and prevention measures, Brazilian peppertree has the potential to establish, spread, and create large monocultures, outcompeting native Texas plant species in our wetlands and coastal prairies, much like Chinese tallow has done.



Description:

Despite its name, Brazilian peppertree has a shrub-like growth form. It is a perennial with green, glossy, pinnate, and slightly serrated leaves that occur in an odd number of leaflets, usually five or seven. The umbrella-shaped canopy is dense and readily tangles with neighboring peppertrees, forming a thicket that shades out all other plants. The berries resemble those of the black pepper (*Piper nigrum*) and are similarly hot to taste. However, they contain volatile terpenes that can irritate some people’s mucous membranes and should not be used as a substitute for black pepper.

It’s the Law!

As of January 6, 2005, it is unlawful to sell, distribute, or import any live form of Brazilian peppertree into the State of Texas (Noxious Plants List, 4 TAC §19.300).

Prevention & Control:

If growing on your property, please remove immediately. Recommended eradication is by cut stump herbicide treatment. For further information, please call the phone numbers listed below or contact your county extension agent.

Warning: People have experienced contact dermatitis and respiratory irritation when in contact or near this plant.

Contact:

If you see this tree growing in the wild or being cultivated, please contact the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) or the Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF).

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