

MELIA AZEDERACH L.

Meliaceae/Mahogany Family

Common Names: Chinaberry, pride-of-India
Synonymy: *M. australis* Sweet; *M. japonica* G. Don; *M. sempervirens* Sw.
Origin: Asia

Botanical Description: Deciduous tree to 15 m (50 ft) tall. Twigs stout with purplish bark, dotted with buff-colored lenticels. Leaves alternate, large, long-petioled, 2 or 3 times compound (odd-pinnate), up to 0.5 m (1.5 ft) long; leaflets pungent when crushed, dark green above, often with sparse pubescence along veins; lighter green below, generally glabrous; margins serrate; blade bases often oblique. Inflorescences showy, loose, stalked panicles from leaf axils. Flowers small, fragrant, with 5 lilac petals; stalks of stamens united into dark purple tube. Fruit a stalked, thinly fleshy, subglobose, single-seeded drupe, yellow or yellowish green at maturity.

Ecological Significance: Introduced around 1830 as an ornamental in South Carolina and Georgia (Gordon and Thomas 1997) and widely planted in southern states. Occurs primarily in disturbed areas such as road right-of-ways and fencerows, but has also invaded floodplain hammocks and marshes and upland woods, particularly in north Florida (Clewell 1985, Godfrey 1988). Reported by land managers as infesting parks in 23 counties (EPPC 1996).

Distribution: Most abundantly naturalized in north and west Florida, but often escaping cultivation in peninsular counties, south to the Keys (Nelson 1994, Wunderlin 1982). Naturalized also in tropical America and planted in temperate and subtemperate areas around the world (Bailey and Bailey 1976). Reported as a prominent roadside and shoreline weed in Cape Province, South Africa (Henderson 1991). In the U.S., naturalized from eastern Virginia, southward to south Florida, and westward to eastern half of Texas and Oklahoma (Godfrey 1988).

LCA



Flowers

Life History: Often shrubby and root-suckering, forming thickets. Frequently flowers and fruits at shrub size. Produces flowers in spring, usually March and April; its fruits long-maturing, prolific, and commonly persistent after leaf fall. Fruits poisonous to humans and some other mammals, but seeds dispersed by a variety of songbirds, who relish the drupes and sometimes gorge themselves to the point of temporary intoxication (Nelson 1994).

KAL



Compound leaf

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Fruits