



# TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

## Forest Health: Common Invasive Plants in Central Texas



1. Chinese Tallow



2. Chinese Privet



3. Japanese Honeysuckle



4. Nandina



5. Chinaberry Tree



6. Yellow Star Thistle



7. King Ranch (KR) Bluestem



8. Tree-of-Heaven



9. Giant Reed



10. Glossy (Japanese) Privet

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Descriptions of 10 Common Invasive Plants in the Central 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. **Chinese Privet:** *Ligustrum sinense*. 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.
3. **Japanese Honeysuckle:** *Lonicera japonica*. Introduced from Japan in the early 1800s for erosion control and as an ornamental. Semi-evergreen, woody vine with simple, opposite leaves and produces white to yellow (sometimes pink) fragrant flowers from April through September.
4. **Nandina:** *Nandina domestica*. Introduced from Asia and India in early 1800s. Widely planted as an ornamental, but now escaped and spreading from around old homes. Evergreen, erect shrub to 8 feet in height, with multiple bushy stems that resemble bamboo. Glossy, compound green or reddish leaves, white to pinkish flowers in terminal clusters and bright red berries in fall and winter.
5. **Chinaberry Tree:** *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 inch in diameter, yellow, persists on the tree in winter and is poisonous.
6. **Yellow Star Thistle:** *Centaurea repens*. Native to southern Europe. Grows in disturbed, sunny sites at low to middle elevations. An annual plant that can reach up to one meter in height. The flowering heads have long tan spines, some of which exceed 0.4 inches in length. The vegetative part of the plant is spineless. The stem has obvious leafy wings.
7. **King Ranch (KR) Bluestem:** *Bothriochloa ischaemum var. songarica*. An introduced bluestem grass that grows 1-3 feet tall. The inflorescence appears nearly digitate, i.e. like fingers on a hand, and often has a purplish coloration. The stalks are grooved on one side; flowers from July to September. Introduced from China in the 1930s and first gained notice on the King Ranch, thus the name. Invades pastures and open areas.
8. **Tree-of-Heaven:** *Ailanthus altissima*. Originally from China. Rapid growing tree to 80 feet tall; alternate, compound leaves, 10-40 leaflets with smooth margins on 1- to 3-foot stalks. Large terminal clusters of small, yellowish-green flowers yield wing-shaped fruit on female trees. Forms thickets and dense stands.
9. **Giant Reed:** *Arundo donax*. Corn-like stems to 20 feet in height; gray-green, hairless stems with long lanceolate alternate leaves that droop at ends. Terminals form dense plumes of flowers to 36 inches long.
10. **Glossy (Japanese) Privet:** *Ligustrum lucidum, L. japonicum*. Also known as wax-leaf ligustrum. Evergreen shrub or small tree to 30 feet tall with glossy 2-4 inch pointed, waxy leaves arranged opposite each other on the stem. Small white flowers yield clusters of blue-black berries. Native to China, Korea and Japan. Commonly planted in hedgerows, but has become invasive in certain areas.

For detailed descriptions and more photos, see James H. Miller's publication "Identification of Invasive Plants in Southern Forests."

*This plant list is only a recommendation and has no legal effect in the state of Texas.  
The Texas Department of Agriculture has sole authority to label terrestrial plants as noxious or invasive.*