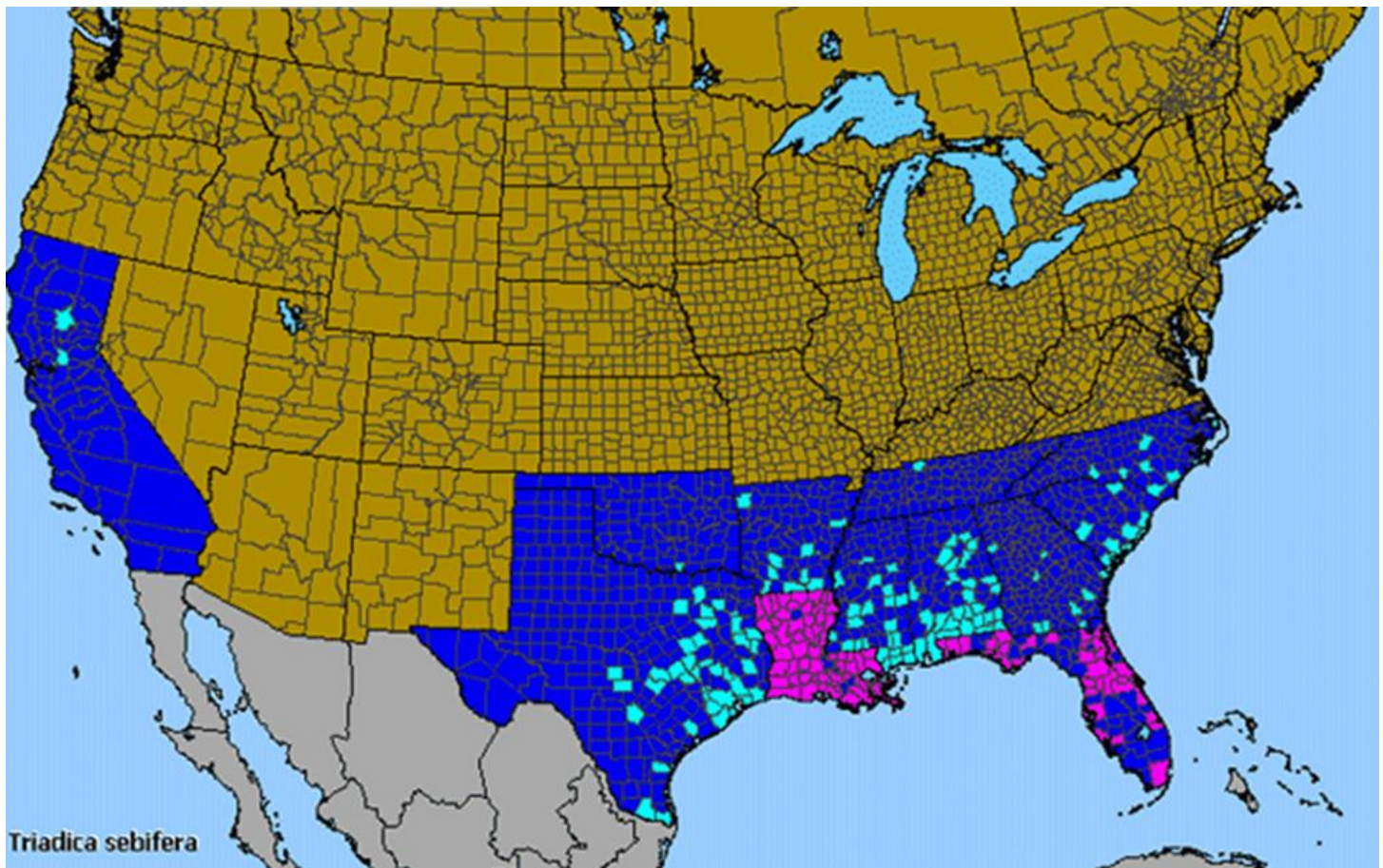




Chinese Tallow Distribution Map

Above is a map that shows the distribution of the invasive species of the Chinese Tallow, also known as the popcorn tree. Note that Okaloosa County is shown to have a noxious population of Chinese Tallow trees.

- - Present/Exotic
- - Present in county/Exotic (Exotic and Present in state, and Present in county)
- - Noxious

Chinese Tallow is Noxious, particularly for our community as it is a Wetlands Preserve. This is not about general impressions or opinions; it's about loss of biodiversity - not just of plants but also of the other living things they support.

The Chinese Tallow is monoecious, and that means it produces male and female flowers on the same plant, and that is why it seemingly reproduces itself at a faster clip than most of the desired trees. In China, the tallow is kept in check by native insects and diseases that retard its explosive growth. It has been in this country such a relatively short time that no equivalent "checks and balances" system has had the time to develop. Thus, they are relatively insect- and disease-resistant and can rapidly replace an entire forest of slower-growing, locally adapted species. When that happens, the entire ecosystem, from bacteria to mammals, that had adapted around the native species, is badly disrupted and potentially destroyed.

Currently state and local dollars are at work towards these efforts, as well as the help of volunteers, such as our Wetlands Committee. Many states have placed a ban on the sale and planting of Chinese Tallow trees, Florida being one of them. You can find that they are on Florida's Administrative Code (Chapter 5B-57.007) of noxious weeds.

We encourage homeowners who have these trees in their yards currently, to remove them. It would also be greatly appreciated to have homeowners volunteer with the Wetlands Committee to help remove the tallow trees during the fall. Please contact Carolyn Dietzen for more information on how to become a volunteer, when meetings are, and how to remove the trees in proper protocol.

If you would like to see a more detailed study, there is one by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council's Chinese Tallow Task Force that was done back in 2005. To read the study, go to http://www.fleppc.org/Manage_Plans/Tallow_Plan.pdf

Chinese Tallow Characteristics in Spring and Summer

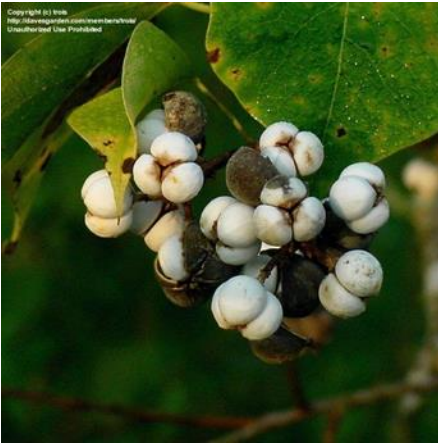


The leaves of a Chinese Tallow are broad and ovate in shape, with smooth edges. They can even be heart shaped! Their leaves are bright green in color and slightly paler underneath. The green fruits shown in the photo typically mature from April to June, and will ripen from September to October.

Chinese Tallow Trees also have distinctive flowers that are prominent in the spring. They appear in spike-like clusters of greenish-yellow and sometimes white.



Chinese Tallow Characteristics in Fall and Winter



Near the end of summer, this is what gives the Chinese Tallow their famed nickname of the "Popcorn Tree". Their seeds are large, and with this size it means they have a large amount of stored energy within the seed allowing for a fast germination. This is how the Chinese Tallow is able to spread so quickly, as it establishes itself faster than any other native species.

One of big reasons as to why the Chinese Tallow is so well loved, is they are aesthetically pleasing year round, but particularly in the fall. Their leaves are deciduous and become bright yellows, oranges, and reds in the fall. But along with these vibrant colors, comes a lot of damage to our local ecosystems.



During the winter this is what most Chinese Tallow trees look like, yet another great example of why they are called "Popcorn Trees". Even during the winter, their seeds are able to spread far and wide through carriers such as wind, rain runoff, and most notable - birds.