Silk Tree, Mimosa

Albizia julibrissin Durz.

Common Names: silk tree, mimosa, silky acacia

Native Origin: Asia; introduced in 1745 as an ornamental

Description: Silk tree is a deciduous leguminous tree in the pea family (Fabaceae) that can grow up to 10-50 feet tall. The bark is light brown, nearly smooth, and generally thin with lens shaped areas along the stem. The attractive fern-like leaves of mimosa are finely divided, 5-8 inches long by about 3-4 inches wide, and alternate along the stems. Silk tree has showy and fragrant pink flowers, about 1½ inches long, that resemble pom- poms and are arranged in panicles at the ends of branches. Fruits are flat, straw-colored pods about 6 inches long containing light brown oval-shaped seeds about ½ inch in length. Pods ripen in August to September and begin to disintegrate soon after, but remain on the trees into winter. Seed pods float and seeds can remain viable for many years. Silk tree reproduces both vegetatively and by seed.

Habitat: Silk tree can grow in a variety of soils but prefers full sun. It is found along roadsides and open vacant lots in urban/suburban areas. It occurs on dry-to-wet sites and spreads along stream banks, preferring open conditions but also persisting in shade but is seldom found in forests with full canopy cover, or at higher elevations (above 900 m or 3,000 ft), where cold hardiness is a limiting factor. It can become a serious problem along riparian areas.

Distribution: This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is reported invasive in DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MA, NC, NJ, SC, TN, VA, and WV.

Ecological Impacts: It is a strong competitor to native trees and shrubs in open areas or forest edges. It forms colonies from root sprouts and spread by animal- and water-dispersed seeds. Dense stands severely reduce the sunlight and nutrients available for other plants.

Control and Management:

- **Manual**- Hand pulling will effectively control young seedlings. Cutting and repeated cutting for sprouts is an initial control measure. Girdling is effective on large trees.

- **Chemical**- It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as glyphosate or triclopyr. Follow label and state requirements.

References:
www.forestimages.org, http://plants.usda.gov, www.nps.gov/plants/alien,
www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/alju1.htm,
Miller, James H., Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests: *A Field Guide for Identification and Control*, USDA FS SRS62, p. 4-5, 75