



# Princess Tree *Paulownia tomentosa* (Thunb.)

**Common Names:** Princess tree, empress tree, royal paulownia

**Native Origin:** East Asia - China

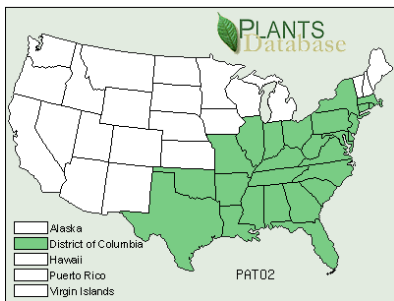
**Description:** Princess tree is a small to medium sized deciduous tree in the figwort family (Scrophulariaceae) reaching to a height of 30-60 feet. The bark is rough, gray-brown, and interlaced with shiny, smooth areas. Stems are olive-brown to dark brown, hairy and markedly flattened at the nodes (where stems and branches meet). Leaves, arranged in pairs along the stem, are large, broadly oval to heart-shaped, or sometimes shallowly three-lobed, and noticeably hairy on the lower leaf surfaces. Conspicuous upright clusters of showy, pale violet, fragrant flowers open in the spring. The fruit is a dry brown capsule with four compartments that may contain several thousand tiny winged seeds. It reproduces by wind- and water-dispersed seeds and root sprouting.

Because of the similarly shaped leaves, princess tree is sometimes confused with native catalpa (*Catalpa speciosa*, *C. bignonioides*) both have long, slender beanlike seed pods.

**Habitat:** Princess tree can be found along roadsides, stream banks, and forest edges. It tolerates infertile and acid soils and drought conditions. It easily adapts to disturbed habitats, including previously burned areas, forests defoliated by pests (such as the gypsy moth) and landslides and can colonize rocky cliffs and scoured riparian zones where it may compete with rare plants in these marginal habitats. Its ability to sprout prolifically from adventitious buds on stems and roots allows it to survive fire, cutting, and even bulldozing in construction areas.



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**Distribution:** This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is reported invasive in CT, DC, GA, KY, LA, MD, NC, NJ, OR, PA, TN, VA, and WV.

**Ecological Impacts:** It is an aggressive ornamental tree that grows rapidly in disturbed natural areas, including forests, stream banks, and steep rocky slopes. Its ability to sprout prolifically from adventitious buds on stems and roots allows it to survive fire, cutting, and even bulldozing in construction areas.

## Control and Management:

- **Manual-** Hand pulling may be effective for young seedlings. Trees can be cut at ground level with power or manual saws. Because Princess tree spreads by suckering, re-sprouts are common after cutting. Cutting should be considered an initial control measure that will require either repeated cutting of re-sprouts or an herbicidal treatment.
- **Chemical-** Cutting or girdling followed immediately by an application of glyphosate or triclopyr is the most effective control method. Basal bark treatment with triclopyr or a foliar application of triclopyr or glyphosate has been effective on smaller trees.



USDA0316227

**References:** www.forestimages.org, http://plants.usda.gov, www.nps.gov/plants/alien, Czarapata, Elizabeth J. Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest, an Illustrated Guide to their Identification and Control, 2005 p. 124