

## Invasive Species Profile: Chinese tallow tree, Popcorn tree (*Sapium sebiferum*)

### Identifying Characteristics

Deciduous tree with milky sap, growing to 60 feet tall. Leaves alternate and ovate with broadly rounded bases that taper to slender points; somewhat heart-shaped. Leaves turn yellow to red in the fall. Flowers small, yellow, in spikes; occur in spring. Fruits are green capsules that turn brown and split open to reveal three white seeds (look like popcorn) in late summer to early fall.

*Sap is milky and poisonous.*



### Habitat

Invades stream banks, roadside ditches and wet areas, but also grows in upland areas. Shade- and salt-tolerant.

### Growth Habits

Introduced as an ornamental and as a potential oil crop species. Early growth is very rapid, with onset of flowers and fruit when the tree reaches three feet in height. Young trees establish a taproot system that allows the tree to withstand extended periods of drought. Seeds dispersed by birds and water. Suckers from stumps.

### Control Methods --- Cut-Stump or Basal Bark

Treat in late spring or early summer after mature leaves have developed, but before seeds have developed. Apply triclopyr amine to the cut stump. Basal bark applications using triclopyr ester are also effective. Reapplications may be necessary. Pull seedlings by hands. Dispose of seeds in plastic bags.

### Florida-Friendly Replacements:

Black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica* var. *biflora*)  
Red maple (*Acer rubrum*)  
Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)  
Cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*)  
Turkey oak (*Quercus laevis*)  
Post oak (*Quercus stellata*)

