

Invasive Species Profile: Melaleuca, Punk tree (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*)

Identifying Characteristics

Rapidly growing tree that can reach up to 100 feet. Identified by its white, many-layered peeling bark (has a “spongy” feel). Narrow, grayish-green, lance-shaped leaves are 2 to 8 inches long and 1/2 inch wide; smell of camphor when crushed. Flowers year-round in creamy white “bottle brush” spikes that are 6 inches long. Fruits are small, brown, woody cone-like clusters that surround young stems. Each cone-like cluster may hold up to 300 tiny seeds.



Pollen from blooms may cause headaches, rashes, asthma attacks, and respiratory irritation in certain people.



Habitat

Prefers wet sites such as lake shores, swamps, and wetlands, but also flourishes in standing water. Will survive in well-drained uplands such as residential yards. Mature trees can survive frost and fire damage. Displaces native vegetation with its rapid colonization.

Growth Habits

Sprouts easily from stumps and roots. Spreads rapidly, forming thickets. Produces up to 20 million windborne seeds per year, per tree; tends to release seeds when stressed.

Control Methods --- Cut-Stump

Cut large trees and treat stumps immediately with triclopyr ester or imazapyr. Pull seedlings by hand. Re-treatments may be necessary.

Florida-Friendly Replacements:

Pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*)
Water hickory (*Carya aquatica*)

In wetland areas:

Pop ash (*Fraxinus caroliniana*)
Sweetbay magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)

In upland areas:

Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*)