Texas Gulf Region's Most Unwated: Brazilian Peppertree

(Schinus terebinthifolius)

Image: Katie Swanson, Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve

What is Brazilian peppertree?

Brazilian peppertree (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) a tree native to Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, was first introduced to Florida in the mid-1800s as an ornamental landscape plant. In recent decades, the plant has escaped cultivation and spread rapidly throughout the state of Florida. Over 700,000 acres in Florida, ranging from mangrove habitat to pine forests have been invaded.

The species was introduced to Texas around 1950 and has since spread rapidly througout the entire Texas coast. The invasion threatens sensitive coastal habitats.

What does it look like?

Brazilian peppertree is a shrub or small tree that may attain over 40 feet in height, typically with a short trunk up to 3 feet in diameter, surrounded by a mass of branches. The leaves are dark green in color, alternately arranged with 1-2 inch long, elliptical, serrated leaflets having distinct yellow or reddish veins. When crushed, the leaves smell like turpentine or pepper.

Image: Ron Billings, Texas A&M Forest Service

What are the impacts?

Brazilian peppertree replaces native vegetation with a growth habit that climbs over understory trees and chokes out most other plants through shading. The plant is especially suited to colonizing disturbed sites and can grow in both wet or dry conditions.

Schinus terebinthifolius belongs to the family Anacardiaceae, which includes poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac. Touching the tree may cause skin irritation to people allergic to it. Pollen generated during blooming may cause respiratory problems.

Image: Katie Swanson, Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve

How can you prevent the spread?

Although Brazilian peppertree was once commonly sold in Texas as an ornamental plant, it is now on the Texas Department of Agriculture's noxious weed list. The importation, sale, and distribution of the species is prohibited. Additionally, homeowners with this tree are being encouraged to control and remove this noxious, invasive species.

For more information or to become involved in stopping Brazilian peppertree on the Texas Gulf Coast visit www.texasinvasives.org/professionals/gulfregion.php.

Brazilian Peppertree

Control and Management

Preventative

Landowners should avoid cultivating, transplanting, or spreading of Brazilian peppertree. Care should be taken to avoid seed spread through disposal of cut trees. If berries are present, please bag and dispose of the berries as trash.

Cultural

A well-established and managed native plant community can provide competition to suppress Brazilian peppertree. However, due to rapid growth and high germination rates, this species will often outcompete native plants.

Manual

Digging or pulling can control small seedlings. When digging or pulling, make sure to remove as much root as possible to prevent resprouting.
Be aware that pulling and digging creates ideal conditions for seed germination, so these sites will need to be carefully monitored for new growth.

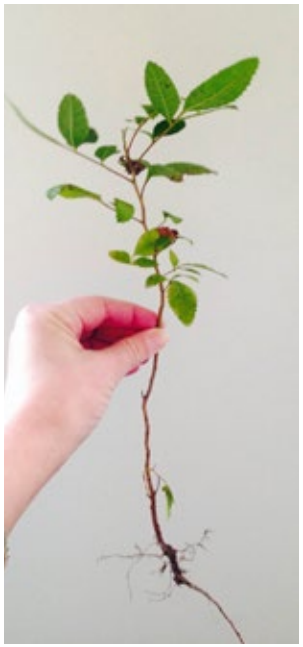

Image: Katie Swanson, Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve

Mechanical

Most effective with large stands. When using these methods, the entire plant, including the root system should be removed. Roots 1/4 inch in diameter or larger can resprout and produce new plants, so follow-up removal will be necessesary. Be aware that mechanical disturbance can create ideal conditions for seed germination and may have implications for soil loss.

Fire

Brazilian peppertree seeds cannot tolerate heat and will not germinate following exposure to fire. Seedlings can also be controlled by exposure to fire, but larger trees have the potential to resprout from the roots following a fire.

Image: Lee Clippard, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Chemical

This species can be controlled by several chemical treatment methods:

Cut Stump Treatment
Cut the trunk as low to the ground as possible. Within 5 minutes, apply a herbicide containing glyphosate or triclopyr to the stump.

Image: Ron Billings,
Texas A&M Forest Service

Basal Bark Treatment
Apply triclopyr ester and a penetrating oil (bark oil) to the outside of the bark from the ground up to 18".

Foliar Treatment
Apply glyphosate or triclopyr directly to the tree's foliage. Coverage is essential and this method is most suitable for control of small seedlings.

Chemical methods are safe and effective if used correctly. Only use when the environental conditions are correct for application. It is illegal to use herbicide in a manner inconsistent with the product's label. Carefully read and follow all instructions.

Integrated Management

Typically, a combination of treatment methods is most effective to eradicate Brazilian peppertree. Your method and prescription should consider human and environmental factors, please contact gulfregioncwma@texasinvasives.org if you need assistance in creating a treatment plan.

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