

Mimosa

INVASIVE SPECIES OF THE MONTH

CHRISTIAN SNEAD

Mimosa, also known as silk tree or silky acacia, is easy to spot along roadsides and woodland edges this time of year thanks to its showy pink flowers. Native to Asia, it was introduced to the United States in the late 1700s. Some sources credit French botanist André Michaux with bringing seeds from Persia to his nursery in Charleston, South Carolina. By the early 1800s, mimosa was being sold commercially, and by 1950, it had become established in the wild in Georgia. Today, it grows in more than half of the U.S. and is considered a highly invasive species throughout the Southeast.

Mimosa is a small deciduous tree that usually grows 10 to 15 feet tall, though it can reach up to 40 feet. It may have a single trunk or multiple stems. Its leaves are feathery and fern-like, with a twice-pinnate structure.



MIMOSA LEAVES
PHOTO CREDIT: JAMES H. MILLER,
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DIAGRAM CREDIT: "WHAT IS A COMPOUND LEAF IN PLANTS?"
BY GUILIA GRAZIATI, THEDAILYECO

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The tree flowers from May through August, producing clusters of fragrant, silky, pink pompom-shaped blooms at the tips of its branches.

Mimosa fruit forms in long, flat pods about six inches in length. These pods grow in clusters and change from light green to brown in late summer before splitting open to release 5 to 10 oval-shaped seeds. The seeds have hard, waterproof coats that allow them to stay dormant in the soil for up to five years.



Like many invasive species, mimosa spreads quickly. It produces large numbers of seeds and can also regenerate through root suckers—shoots that grow from the base roots and can form new trees. Mimosa thrives in disturbed soils and is commonly found along roadsides, stream banks, forest edges, open lots, and even shaded areas. While it grows best in full sun and well-drained soil, it easily tolerates drought, poor soil, shade, flooding, wind, and salt. Mimosa also alters the nitrogen levels in the soil, helping itself grow while harming native plants and disrupting natural habitats.

Several methods are effective for removing mimosa. For small seedlings, manual removal works well—especially if done before the plant sets seed. Be sure to remove the entire root system to prevent re-sprouting. For larger trees, cutting them down and applying herbicide to the freshly cut surface is more effective. A diluted solution of either glyphosate or triclopyr can be used to kill the remaining root system and prevent regrowth.



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