



Invasive Species of the Month for May/June 2019

White Mulberry (*Morus alba*)

Origin: Asia

Interesting Fact: White Mulberry was introduced to North America in the 1800s as a host plant for the Chinese Silkworm in order to start a silk trade.

Description: White Mulberry is a medium tree that can grow up to 60 ft. tall. It has alternate, irregular leaves and produces lots of berry-like fruit that ranges from white to red to black.

Defining characteristics:

- Alternate, irregular leaves that range from entire to many lobed
- The leaves often tend to be glossy on the top
- Has small clusters of flowers called catkins that bloom in spring
- Fruit ranges from white to red to black

Botanical Terminology:

Catkins – a spike-like flowering structure present in some plants

Entire – a leaf without lobes

Lobed – a clefted leaf shape



Left Image: White Mulberry leaves (note glossy shine)

Center Image: Different color White Mulberry fruits

Right Image: White Mulberry catkins



Habitat: Disturbed areas, right-of-ways, fallow fields, woods, forest edges, hedgerows, yards



Above Image: Mature White Mulberry bark.

Ecological threat: Female White Mulberry trees produce a copious amount of fruit that is spread by all kinds of wildlife. New individuals pop up anywhere. In addition, White Mulberry is a fast-growing tree and can outcompete native species. Lastly, White Mulberry has been found to hybridize with the native Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*), and since White Mulberry is more common than Red Mulberry, it threatens the native species' genetic integrity.

Control Methods:

- **Manual:** Pulling up young individuals can be effective. Using a leverage pulling tool, like the Pullerbear™, can help.
- **Chemical:** A foliar application of glyphosate* is generally effective on large patches of young individuals. Cut stump applications of glyphosate* are also very effective on medium to large trees. A basal bark application with triclopyr* can also be effective.

*Always follow herbicide label instructions.

References

- Hilty, John. "White Mulberry." Illinois Wildflowers, 20 Dec. 2017,
http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/trees/plants/wh_mulberry.htm.
Kaufman, Sylvan R. and Wallace Kaufman. *Invasive Plants*. Stackpole Books, 2012.