



Chinese Tallow Tree

Sapium sebiferum

01-38



| <u>Hardiness</u> | <u>Exposure</u> | <u>Soil</u> | <u>Water</u> | <u>Flowers</u> | <u>Height</u> |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Zones 8, 9, 12-16, 18-21, H1 | Full sun | Will grow in most soils | Moderate to regular watering | In November and December greenish-yellow flower spikes appear on the tips of branches | 30 to 40 feet tall |

The Chinese tallow is a fast-growing deciduous tree with a rounded or conical crown and an open, airy look. It can get up to 40 ft (12.2 m) tall with a 20 ft (6.1 m) spread. The leaves are diamond shaped, abruptly pointed at the tip, and 2-3 in (5-7.6 cm) long. They flutter in the breeze like poplar leaves. In fall the leaves turn brilliant shades of scarlet, orange, yellow and maroon. The springtime flowers are in yellowish green catkins on the branch tips. The fruits are 3-lobed brown capsules that open to reveal three white, waxy seeds that resemble popcorn. Like most members of the spurge family, broken twigs and leaf stems exude a milky latex sap.

Chinese tallow is native to China and Japan where it has been cultivated for its useful seeds and as an ornamental for more than a thousand years. It is said that Benjamin Franklin introduced Chinese tallow into the United States in 1776. Since then it has escaped from cultivation and is now an extremely invasive weed in much of the lower southeast and is currently expanding its range west and north through Texas and North Carolina. It is also considered a weed in Australia. It was planted as a street tree in California where it apparently has not yet become invasive, perhaps because of insufficient rainfall.

***** Milky sap is poisonous if ingested**