

PLANT ALERT



Public Gardens as Sentinels against Invasive Plants

Golden rain tree

Koelreuteria paniculata

ISSUED NOVEMBER 2025

Golden rain tree has been identified by the PGSIP working group as a plant of concern due to a growing number of botanic gardens and arboreta reporting on its ability to escape from cultivation.

Public gardens across North America are sharing their horticultural expertise to document cases of plants escaping from cultivation. The goal of this alert is to increase awareness of gardens' observations about golden rain tree's behavior within their properties and to recommend actions to reduce its capacity to spread. For more information visit the [PGSIP website](#).



T. Davis Sydnor, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org

Recommended Actions

PGSIP urges these next steps for propagators, nurseries, landscape architects, invasive plant councils, and public gardens.

- Increase public garden monitoring and reporting
- Eradicate spontaneous populations
- Develop and evaluate cultivars for reduced fertility

[Public gardens
Sign up for PGSIP here](#)

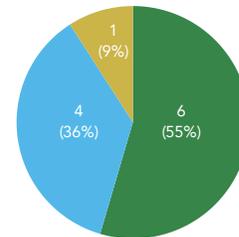
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[Not a public garden?
Share data here](#)

Data from PGSIP Gardens

Eleven out of 67 gardens have used the PGSIP guidelines to rank golden rain tree according to its ability to escape from cultivation. Reports have come from 9 states and provinces across 5 regions*, the most regions of any taxon reported to PGSIP, including Washington, California, New Mexico, Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, Kentucky, New York, and Ontario. One of the reports specifies the cultivar 'JFS-Sunleaf', ranking it a Watchlist species. Given that golden rain tree is cultivated in 97 U.S. and 7 Canadian gardens, and that escape from cultivation is being reported across such a wide geographic range, more gardens are encouraged to participate in PGSIP to further understand the extent and degree of its spread. Click on the map below to stay up to date on new reports of golden rain tree.

How Gardens Ranked Golden Rain Tree



Number and percentage of gardens that assigned each program ranking

[CLICK HERE](#)

Watchlist

[CLICK HERE](#)

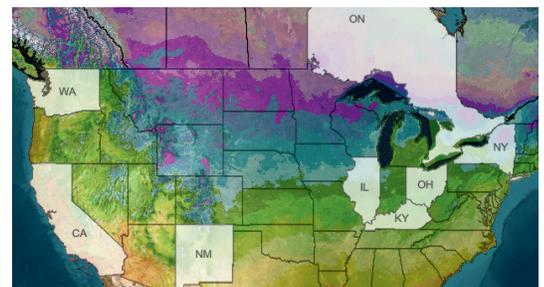
Potentially Invasive

[CLICK HERE](#)

Invasive

[CLICK HERE](#)

Assessed as Invasive



Click map to visit the PGSIP Data Dashboard

*Biodiversity Information Standards

Golden rain tree *Koelreuteria paniculata*

Background Information

BRIEF DESCRIPTION¹: 30-40' tall tree with open-branching and rounded crown. Alternate, pinnate/bipinnate, feathery, compound leaves with 7-17 irregularly lobed leaflets that emerge pinkish/bronze-purple, mature to bright green in summer, and turn yellow in fall. Showy yellow flowers in terminal panicles (12-15"). Brown, papery, three-valved seed capsules.

HARDINESS ZONES: 5-9

NATIVE RANGE: Northern China, Japan, and Korea

STATUS: Not currently regulated

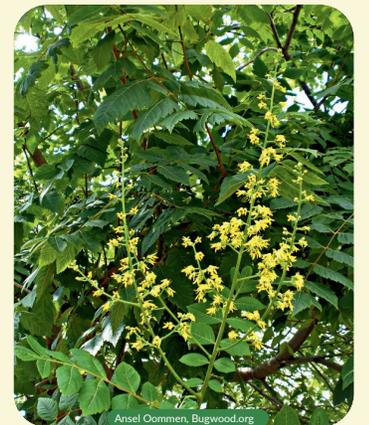
MALE CULTIVARS: None

POTENTIAL IMPACTS: Outcompetes and shades out native vegetation.



Unique Features

Similar in appearance to other trees with alternately arranged, compound leaves including invasive tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), and native black walnut and sumacs². Yellow panicles of flowers and three-valved seed capsules are unique to golden rain tree.



Habitat

Prefers full sun. Tolerant of a wide range of soils as well as pollution and drought conditions. PGSIP gardens reported this plant spreading into other garden beds, managed natural areas, turfing areas, rights-of-way, and drainage areas.

Reproduction and Growth Rate

This fast growing plant spreads by seed and readily self-seeds. Its high rate of seed production and high germination rate allows this plant to spread quickly and shade out native species^{3,4}.



References and Links

- 1 - [Missouri Botanical Garden](#)
- 2 - [Missouri Department of Conservation](#)
- 3 - [The Morton Arboretum](#)
- 4 - [North Carolina State University Extension](#)

