

Controlling Callery Pear

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Callery pear is an ornamental pear that is native to Asia. If you look around now you can recognize these trees by the abundant white blooms. They seem to be everywhere from homesites to the right-of-way along the interstate. It was first brought to North America in the early 1900's to use as rootstock for domestic pears to help control fire blight. This tree was introduced as an ornamental in the 1950's. The most common cultivar is the Bradford pear. While it may be an attractive tree, it is a very brittle tree and often breaks apart in stormy weather either from wind or ice making it undesirable for landscape purposes.

These trees can grow as tall as 50 feet with a spread of 20 to 35 feet in some cultivars. They were first believed to be sterile and unable to reproduce by seed. However, by means of cross pollination the Callery pear has been able to produce viable fruit. The tree produces an abundance of small pears that soften after frost in the fall. At this point birds eat them and spread the seeds with their droppings across the countryside. Due to their ability to grow very rapidly, they threaten native plant species and wildlife by crowding out desirable plants and taking over the land. As a result of this it is now considered an invasive plant and many states have either stopped sale or are in the process of phasing out the sale of this tree. Landowners should be diligent about controlling this tree when they first see it growing on their property.

In addition to spreading by seed, Callery pear can reproduce from the roots of the tree. Recognition of this has to be part of a control plan. Here are some control options. If you cut the tree, immediately treat the surface of the stump as well as the bark and exposed roots with the appropriate herbicide. For example, a mixture of 75 percent diesel (or other oil carrier) and 25% triclopyr (Remedy or generic). This has to be done immediately (not hours later) to be effective. Another option, for trees less than 6 inches in diameter, is to wet the lower 18 inches of the trunk, including the collar, with the same solution. These treatments can be done any time of the year. There are also products that work well as foliar treatments. **Always follow the label directions** and contact your Extension office for more information.