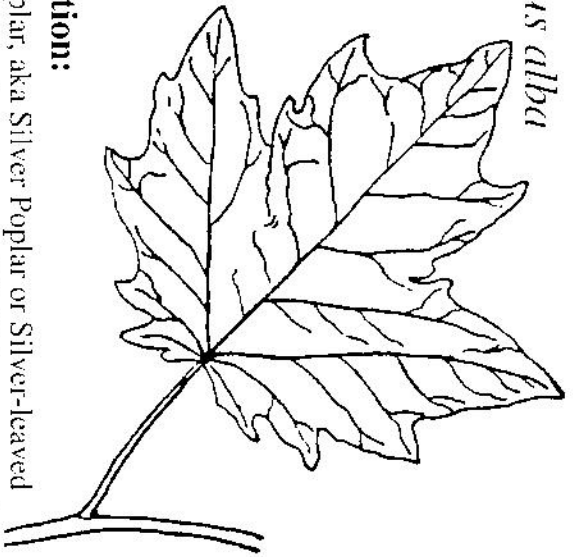


Invasive Alert

White Poplar

Populus alba



Description:

White poplar, aka Silver Poplar or Silver-leaved Poplar is a tree that can attain 70-90 feet at maturity. The silvery leaves, with hairy white undersides, are roughly triangular and lobed.

History:

This tree's rapid growth rate, along with its potential use as a shade tree, originally spurred the introduction of White Poplar from Eurasia during the Colonial period for use in landscaping and as a street tree. In Rhode Island, the spread of White Poplar from cultivation is best seen on Block Island, where the plant was introduced in the late 1800's to provide shade around dwellings on the otherwise open, treeless landscape. After the turn of the century the number of grazing livestock declined on Block Island and formerly open lots quickly revegetated with both native and exotic shrubs. White Poplar escaped to form thickets of young plants that vegetatively arose as "suckers" from the roots of mother trees.

The Problem:

In grasslands and open areas dense patches of poplar saplings effectively crowd out native vegetation. In addition to impacts on natural habitats, white poplar can present maintenance problems for the landowner in restraining the prolific reproduction of seedlings, and in unclogging pipes, drains, and sewers that can become clogged by the abundantly produced roots.

Control:

White Poplar is controlled primarily by cutting. Larger mother trees should be girdled and the suckers continually cut back, preferably from June through August. This process may take several years to eliminate a particular patch of White Poplar.

Alternatives:

Any native shade tree.

RI Wild Plant Society

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