

Hernando County Brazilian Pepper-Tree and Lead Tree Removal: Frequently Asked Questions

Dr. William Lester, Extension Agent II Email: wlester@ufl.edu

Dr. Stephen Enloe, UF Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants



Figure 1. Brazilian pepper-tree with fruits. Photo by Amy Ferriter, State of Idaho, Bugwood.org



Figure 2. Lead tree with seed pods attached. Photo by Tony Pernas, USDI National Park Service, Bugwood.org

Introduction. Hernando County is now home to many species of invasive trees and plants. In response to community concerns, an ordinance has been implemented that aims to reduce the numbers of two invasive trees within the county. Property owners are now required to remove Brazilian pepper-tree (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) and lead tree (*Leucaena leucocephala*) from their property.

What is the concern with these species? Both species are highly invasive and may cause many problems in natural areas, homeowner landscapes, rights of ways, and parks. They aggressively colonize open lots and forest edges and interiors, forming dense thickets. These thickets form often impenetrable stands and displace native species that would normally occur there. Hernando County is attempting to get ahead of these two problem species before they spread anymore.

Where are they found in Hernando County? Both of these trees are primarily found along the Gulf Coast of Hernando County, but individual trees or small patches can occur anywhere throughout the county.

Can I hire a professional company to remove them for me? Yes. Hernando County has a list of recommended professionals, all of which have completed a UF/IFAS short course on how to properly manage these invasive trees. These professionals can remove trees and treat the stumps safely, and they have access to herbicides that private individuals generally do not. They will also be familiar with the correct herbicides for each situation and are certified to apply these herbicides safely.



UF/IFAS Extension Hernando County Fact Sheet 2016-1

How can I get rid of them myself? These trees can be removed and controlled easily and safely if you understand a little about the tree, the herbicides labeled for control, and the recommended control techniques. The following questions address effective removal.

Can I hand pull them? Seedlings and very small saplings may be hand pulled. Hand pulling is a very useful method for controlling new plants that often emerge after removal of mature trees or shrubs has occurred. Hand pulling is not effective on new sprouts that emerge from lateral roots or stumps as these tend to break off.

Can I cut them down for removal? Yes, but any cut stems will resprout within a few months and result in multi-stemmed shrubs and trees that are often more difficult to deal with. To prevent resprouting, all stumps should be treated with an herbicide immediately after cutting. This is called the cut stump treatment method.

What herbicide should I use for cut stump treatments? The safest and most effective herbicide active ingredients that homeowners have easy access to include glyphosate and triclopyr. The cut stump method and these herbicides are fully described in the following University of Florida IFAS publication: Herbicides to kill Invasive trees in Home Landscapes.
<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/AG/AG25900.pdf>

What is the best time of year to remove them? Removing Brazilian pepper-trees that are loaded with fruits may result in significant seed spread. Therefore, the best time of year to remove larger Brazilian pepper-trees is when they are not fruiting, which would be from spring until early fall. Lead tree, unfortunately, flowers and sets seed pods year round, so there is no optimal time to remove it in relation to seed production. However, removing lead trees before they become reproductive can prevent this problem.

How can I dispose of the trees after removal? If the homeowner decides to perform the removal, it is important that all berries, seed pods and leaves from the trees be collected and securely bagged to prevent spread of the trees to new areas. Bagged debris may be placed out for regular trash pick-up in Hernando County or taken to the land fill. Larger branches and trunks should be taken to the land fill, chipped, or left in place to decay naturally.

I removed both species, but they came back from new seedlings. How long do the seeds last in the soil? Brazilian pepper-tree seeds are viable for approximately six months, so new seedlings can emerge only in the growing season after they are produced. Lead tree seeds, however can remain viable in the soil for as much as ten years, so new seedlings may emerge for years after a tree has been removed. Property owners should remain vigilant and check frequently for new tree seedlings emerging on their property and pull them when detected.