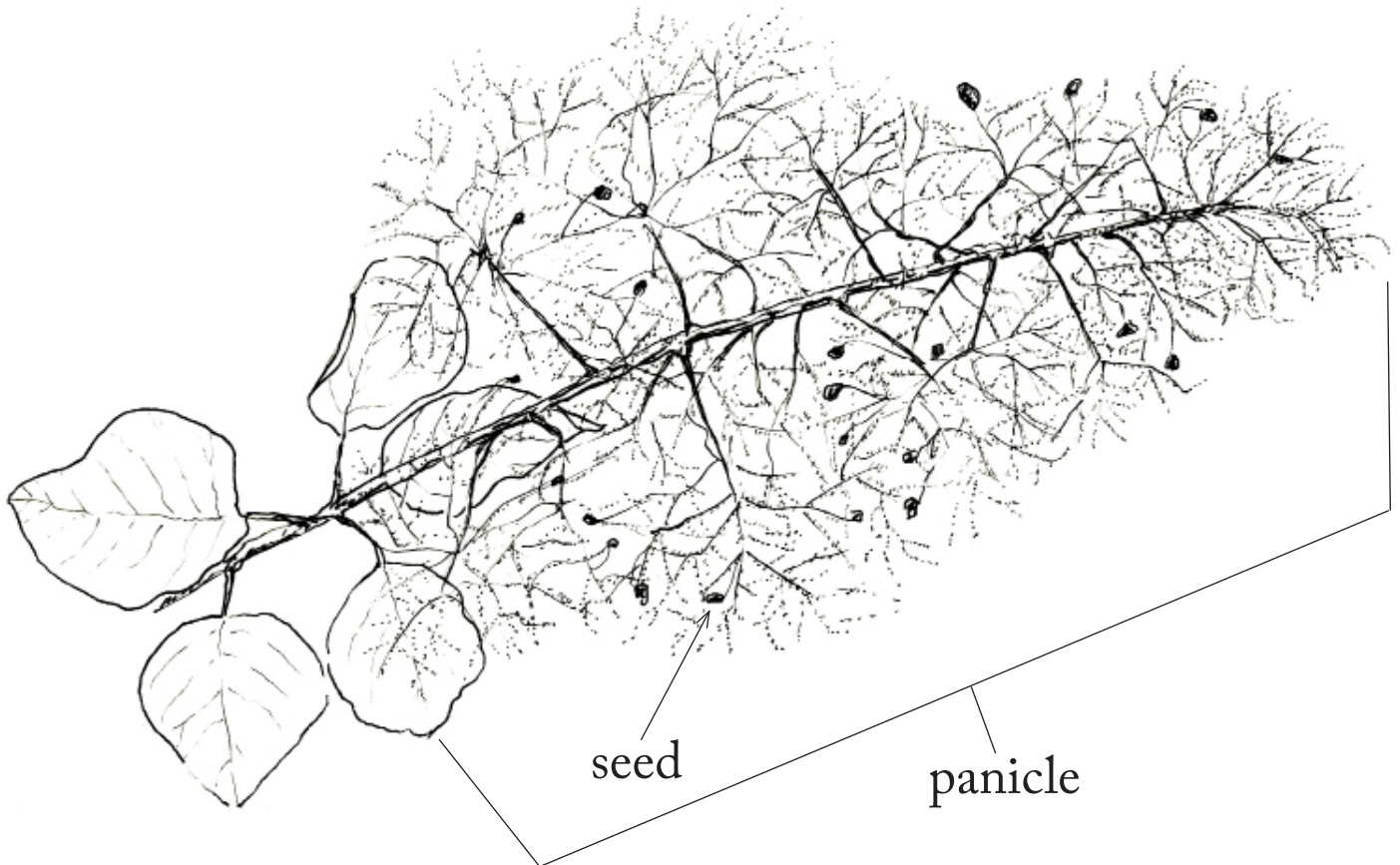


Smoketree

Cotinus coggygría



Look closely

Cotinus coggygría is commonly called smoketree because the hairy panicles look like billowing clouds of smoke. These clusters are often mistaken for flowers, but if you look closely you will see numerous small, black seeds that resemble flattened peppercorns. Small, yellowish or cream flowers bloom in late May or June but often go unnoticed. They are not nearly as showy as the smoky panicles, the haze of fluffy inflorescences that persist from early July through August.

They are especially beautiful if seen with the morning or late afternoon light shining through their fuzzy fruiting structures. The drama and appeal of this plant makes it a well known, lovely summer-flowering deciduous shrub or tree of limited size.

Did you know?

Cotinus coggrygia is native to an area from southeastern Europe to central China. The genus *Cotinus* is a member of the Anacardiaceae, or cashew family, and is botanically related to our familiar poison ivy. *Cotinus* only rarely causes dermatitis and, unlike poison ivy, is not invasive. The wood of *Cotinus* has been an important source of orange-yellow dye wherever the plant is found and continues to be used as a dye in China.

There is a native American smoketree, *Cotinus obovatus*, commonly called chittamwood, originally found growing in the mountains of west-central Texas. American smoketree has less profuse “smoke,” but it makes up in ornamental value with its outstanding spectrum of brilliant orange, scarlet, or purple fall foliage. Their fall colors, are among the most spectacular of all woody plants. As the the multi-trunked trees mature, the bark usually develops into a beautiful gray to gray-brown with an interesting fishscale texture.

Cotinus obovatus occurs naturally on rocky, calcareous soils in a few hilly and mountainous areas of south central United States. While not abundant, it is no longer under the pressure it experienced during the Civil War when it was harvested nearly to extinction for its use of yellow to orange dyewood.

There are over 25 *Cotinus* plants at the Arboretum. Can you find them all?

* Start with these

