

## **Callery Pear – More Harm Than Good**

Good intentions can unfortunately sometimes lead to some unexpected consequences. The Callery pear tree is one of those. Several posts and articles have been showing up on my Facebook page from such sites as the Kansas Forest Service and Oklahoma Forestry Service regarding Callery Pear. Callery Pears are in bloom and driving down the road, you can see the bright white flowers along the roads and out in pastures. Historically these pear trees were one of the “Kings of Spring” with beautiful white blooms and purple foliage in the fall. Unfortunately, over time the trees have escaped and are now taking over rangeland. Just around the El Dorado area, these trees can easily be seen on west 6<sup>th</sup> street as you get close to the Kansas Turnpike, on 254 as you head west out of El Dorado and along the Kansas Turnpike if you take it south from either El Dorado exit.

The original Callery Pear was a variety that went by the name of “Bradford” and while it had beautiful, but smelly, flowers the tree was fruitless and most people willingly overlooked the slightly unpleasant flower smell for the blooms. As the trees grew it became apparent that the branching structure of the tree caused it to break under wind and other storms so the hybridizers began to develop varieties with stronger branch structures. This is where the issue began, pear trees need another variety of pear to cross pollinate to produce fruit. As new varieties appeared on the market and were planted the once fruitless Ornamental Pear started to develop small marble sized pears. These pears are simply a mess to clean up for homeowners but birds love them and will happily spread the seeds throughout the area. The pears that come up from the seeds have thorns and are prolific bloomers that start producing fruit at a young age. This ability has further exacerbated the issue leading to the Callery Pear tree being listed as an invasive species in several states plus a plague of baby pears spreading in locations they weren’t planted. This is unfortunately how the “King of Spring” turned from a spring beauty into a nightmare of a beast.

While listening to a webinar recently, Ryan Armbrust, Kansas Forest Service Rural Forestry Program Coordinator shared; wild Callery Pears first started being noticed in 2014. In 2018, the Kansas Forest Service achieved buy-in from all partners to remove Callery pear from Kansas preferred tree list. In 2020, they received a grant to map Callery Pear in Kansas and in 2021 they started herbicide field trials.

Luckily, identifying the Callery Pear is not too difficult. In the spring, the bright white flower on the current blooming tree is very easy to pick out. Let’s take it one step farther and make sure you are not looking at a Mexican Plum or some other tree. Callery Pear’s are also easily identified by their not so delightful smelling odor on the flowers. “Dead fish” smell is one term I hear used to describe the smell of Callery Pear flowers. If it smells good, then it is not a Callery Pear. The Plum trees smell better and also have a rough and peeling bark as compared to the smooth and lighter colored bark found on pear trees.

The Callery pear was known to be a tough tree in the landscape and that has unfortunately carried into the wild trees. While burning controls trees, especially eastern cedar trees and also helps maintain an ecosystem, fire is not an effective method for controlling Callery Pear. Their deep root system allows them to sucker and come back unfortunately, better than ever. Pulling is effective on very small seedlings while mowing is effective only when it’s frequent and followed with chemical control. Chemical control does work, but it’s imperative you follow the label instructions and wear appropriate PPE. Chemical options include, foliar, basal bark, hack-and-squirt, cut-stump and soil application. Soil application seems to be the less effective of those options listed. Additional information on controlling Callery Pear’s can be found by visiting the links below.

Kansas Forest Service - [https://www.kansasforests.org/forest\\_health/callerypear.html](https://www.kansasforests.org/forest_health/callerypear.html)

Webinar Recording - <https://deepproofs.org/seasonal-webinars/> - Goodbye Callery Pear – Smell Ya Later