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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Callery Pear Field Event in Columbia, MO — April 13, 2018

Learn how to identify and control this highly invasive tree that threatens native wildlife and causes difficulties for private and public landowners.

Jefferson City, MO (March 13, 2018)—Call it the Jekyll and Hyde street tree of Suburban America. Once a favorite tree to plant for its profusion of spring blossoms and brilliant fall foliage, the Callery pear—also referred to as Bradford pear—is now becoming known as a highly invasive, weak-wooded, smelly, thorny nuisance.

“From China to our backyards and parks, Bradford pears brought white flowers and fall colors to many parts of the U.S. for decades.” However, as Dr. Reid Smeda, Professor in Weed Science from the University of Missouri explains, “Recent introduction of other cultivars led to hybridization and resulted in fertile seed production. Through foraging birds, escaped Callery pear populations have exploded, and threaten native biodiversity as these invasive trees steadily march into our native grasslands and forested areas, and are even becoming a headache for land developers. Don’t let the beauty of this beast fool you.”

Dr. Smeda is one of several speakers to present practical information at the Callery Pear Field Event to be held Friday, April 13, 2:00 p.m., at South Providence Medical Park, 551 E. Southampton Drive in Columbia, MO organized by the Missouri Invasive Plant Task Force (MoIP). An inter-agency and inter-organizational resource of the Grow Native! program, MoIP’s principal goal is to make early detection and control of invasive plants a higher statewide priority.

Following the speakers—which include representatives from Rock Bridge Memorial State Park, a local fire station, the Missouri Department of Conservation, and City of Columbia Parks & Recreation—conservation and horticulture experts at the field event will staff stations with information on how to identify the Callery pear and distinguish it from desirable native trees; how to control this highly invasive woody species; and how to choose native alternatives to plant instead. This event is being held on land with a Callery pear infestation so attendees can get a first-hand, up-close view of this problem plant.

Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) is native to China. Several cultivars of the tree are offered commercially, including 'Aristocrat', 'Autumn Blaze', 'Bradford' (which is the commonly planted “Bradford pear”), 'Capital', 'Chanticleer', 'Redspire', and 'Whitehouse'. These cultivars are generally themselves unable to produce fertile seeds when self-pollinated, or cross-pollinated with another tree of the same cultivar. However, if different cultivars of Callery pears are grown in proximity, thanks to

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insect pollination, they often produce fertile seeds—carried by birds—that can sprout and establish wherever they are dispersed. Older trees in urban landscapes are producing viable seeds each year that contribute to growing infestations. Breaking this cycle begins with choosing native alternatives for future plantings, and controlling existing invasive populations.

The invasive trees are also notorious for their weak wood, with split trunks lying in yards and parking lots following ice storms. The flowers have an unpleasant odor; many trees have thorns; and the trees provide few resources for native insects, songbirds, or other beneficial wildlife.

The Callery Pear Field Event is free and open to the public. Landowners, municipal and conservation professionals, parks managers, gardeners, and other outdoor enthusiasts are welcome to attend. Attendees may bring lawn chairs if they wish. The field event will be held rain or shine.

The event will take place near the northwest parking area at South Providence Medical Park, located at 551 E. Southampton Drive in Columbia, MO. Individuals with special needs who will not be able to walk to the location where the trees are located may park in the east lot, but there will be limited spaces available.

Four days after the field event, Rock Bridge Memorial State Park will host a Callery pear volunteer work day on Tuesday, April 17 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Park staff will demonstrate cutting and herbicide application techniques that you can put into practice during the work day. Tools and herbicide will be provided. Please call the park at 573-449-7400 to reserve your spot. Further instructions will be provided when you call. Inclement weather back-up date for the volunteer work day is Thursday, April 19.

The Missouri Invasive Plant Task Force (MoIP) is a resource of Grow Native!—an 18-year-old native plant marketing and education program serving the lower Midwest. Grow Native! is administratively housed by the nonprofit Missouri Prairie Foundation. For more information about MoIP, visit www.moinvasives.org; for more on the Grow Native! program, or the Missouri Prairie Foundation, call 888-843-6739 or send a message to grownative@moprairie.org.