

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 150

By Doggett

A RESOLUTION urging the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture to complete a comprehensive economic study about the effect of Bradford pear trees on agriculture and forestry in the State.

WHEREAS, the Bradford pear, also known as Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*), is a tree native to Asia that was introduced to the United States in the early 1900s for hybridization efforts aimed at improving disease resistance, particularly against fire blight, which was affecting native pear trees in commercial orchards; and

WHEREAS, in the 1950s, the Bradford pear became a popular ornamental choice due to its uniform growth, consistent flowering, and attractive form; today, the Bradford pear has been reported in more than half of the counties within Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, while individual cultivars are self-sterile and do not produce fruit or seeds, when different cultivars are planted nearby, they can cross-pollinate and produce fruit; the widespread planting of Bradford pear initially overlooked this risk, unintentionally facilitating cross-pollination with other pear cultivars; and

WHEREAS, the development of new cultivars inadvertently increased the likelihood of cross-pollination and fruit production; many cultivars are grafted onto rootstocks with diverse genetic traits, which frequently produce vigorous sprouts, further enhancing genetic viability and fruiting potential; thus, the resulting spread is not composed of uniform cultivars but rather sexually reproducing populations with diverse genotypes that recombine with each generation; and

WHEREAS, cross-pollinated trees produce abundant fruit, which is consumed by birds and dispersed over long distances; additionally, Bradford pear spreads vegetatively through

sprouting, often forming dense thickets within a few years and outcompeting native plants for light, water, and nutrients; and

WHEREAS, the volunteer, cross-pollinated Bradford pear trees often develop sharp, three-inch-long thorns capable of puncturing tractor tires during mowing or brush clearing, posing a hazard to equipment and workers involved in land management efforts or in clearing pastures; and

WHEREAS, additionally, the Bradford pear has a weak branching structure, leading to frequent breakage in storms and the potential for significant property damage; the tree's flowers emit a foul-smelling odor, and the tree itself provides little to no food for insects, resulting in a damaged ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, chemical controls are required for treatment, yet incomplete control may lead to resprouting, requiring repeated treatments; over time, frequent use of herbicides can contribute to herbicide resistance in the population; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we urge the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture to complete a comprehensive economic study about the effect of Bradford pear trees on agriculture and forestry in the State of Tennessee in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Environment and Conservation, the Department of Transportation, and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture submit a report of its findings to the General Assembly by April 30, 2026.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Senior Vice Chancellor and Senior Vice President of the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, the Commissioner of Agriculture, the Commissioner of Environment and

Conservation, the Commissioner of Transportation, and the Executive Director of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.