



PLANT FACT SHEET

Ziziphus jujuba Mill., non Lam.

GENUS *Ziziphus* FAMILY Rhamnaceae

COMMON NAMES Chinese Date, Chinese jujube

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Seeds - oil

The fruit are eaten fresh, dried or preserved in sugar. They can be stewed, baked, pickled, or used in puddings, cakes, breads, jellies, soups and sweetmeats.

The ripe fruit are powdered and cooked with millet or rice.

The kernels are edible.

DESCRIPTION

A small deciduous tree. It can grow to 13 m tall. It has drooping branches. There are thorns on the branches. The plant sends up thorny suckers often at a distance from the tree. These need to be cut off. They can be used for rootstock for grafting. The leaves are small and oval. They are 2-5 cm long and bright shiny green. The leaves turn bright yellow before falling. During the growing season, each node of a woody branch produces one to 10 small branches. These fall off later. The flowers are small and 0.5 cm across. They are white to green and produced in large numbers in the angles of leaves. The fruit are round or long and vary from cherry to plum size. They are 2-3 cm long. They have a single hard stone with two seeds. The fruit changes from green to yellow with red spots as it ripens. When fully red and ripe it softens and wrinkles. There are many named varieties.

HABITAT

A subtropical plant. It can stand high temperatures in summer then due to winter dormancy can tolerate very cold temperatures. It only requires a small winter chill to enable it to fruit. They do best in warm sunny positions. They cannot grow in shade. They do best in sandy well drained soils. They can grow in soils with high salinity or alkalinity. It can tolerate drought but fruits best with adequate rainfall. It grows on the Deccan in India. It grows in western Sudan. It suits hardiness zones 7-10. In Sichuan and Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed but these do not breed true. Grafting, budding or cuttings can be used. Root suckers can be used. Although cross pollination is not required for fruit production it is needed for producing viable seed. A spacing of 3-4 m is suitable.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Fruit are produced 4-5 years after planting. Fruit do not ripen at the same time so fruit can be picked from the one tree over several weeks. Fruit need to be picked when ripe. Ripe fruit can be stored at room temperature for about one week. Tree dried fruit stores for a long time.

NOTES

Plants are affected by witches broom (phytoplasma) that are spread by insects. Calcium chloride has been used to stop fruit cracking. Fruit are reasonably high in folates 23µg/100.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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