

Indian Jujube

Jujube, Chinese date, Chinese apple, ber, dessert apple

Ziziphus mauritiana

Rhamnaceae family

ECHO PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

DESCRIPTION, ORIGIN - Indian jujube is a spiny, evergreen shrub which can grow into a tree of 15m (44') with a trunk diameter of 40cm (16"). The fruit is round, shiny yellow to red/black, 6cm x 4cm (2.4" x 1.6") with white, sweet, juicy flesh eaten fresh or dried. This is a fast-growing tree, very hardy under hot, dry conditions with extreme shifts in temperature from season to season. In these areas it is good for erosion control, shade, shelter, windbreak, and reclamation of nutrient-depleted soil. It tolerates salinity, drought and waterlogged soil. Commercial cultivation extends up to 1,000m (3,500') elevation, where rainfall is between 300mm - 500mm (12"-20"). The thorny branches of *Z. mauritiana* make it an effective living fence. The leaves make good fodder for sheep, goats and a type of silkworm. Its habit of branching horizontally makes it easy to harvest the wood for firewood and charcoal, production of a hard, strong wood for tool handles, building construction (termite resistant) or tannins from the bark. Indigestion can be treated by drinking the water used to soak the roots. Indian jujube's origin is south to central Asia with records of its existence in India from 1000 B.C. It has become naturalized in tropical Africa, India, China and the Mediterranean where it is commercially important.

CULTIVATION - To germinate seeds of Indian Jujube, the seed covering needs to be cracked and exposed to full sun. Sprouts will grow after the stump is cut or a frost kills the leaves. Fruit can be expected after 3 - 5 years; sooner with irrigation, fertilizer, and weeding.

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HARVESTING AND SEED PRODUCTION - Indian jujube produces abundant pollen and nectar, attracting bees for pollination. Seeds are spread by birds and mammals that consume the fruit. Storing seeds for four months will improve germination. Storage of seeds for five years in sealed containers at 5°C (41°F) is possible but viability drops after the first year.

PESTS AND DISEASES - Indian Jujube, is a host for a scale insect that feeds on the sap of the tree and produces a substance from which shellac and varnish is made. Pests such as fruit flies, caterpillars, weevils, leafhoppers and mealybugs do not seem to significantly affect the 50-75 year fruiting lifespan of this tree.

COOKING AND NUTRITION - The fruit is eaten fresh, to flavor drinks or dried and made into flour/meal, a cheese-like paste or in candy making. It is a good source of carotene, vitamins A and C (higher than citrus or apples). Indonesians eat the young leaves cooked as a vegetable. Goats and sheep will also feed on the green leaves.

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