

Acacia albida

(*Faidherbia albida*)

Fabaceae

Indigenous

Am: *Grar*

Eng: *Apple-ring acacia, winter thorn*

Ga: *Kertor*

Or: *Gerbi, Derot*

Sh: *Momona*

Tg: *Aqba, Garsha, Momona*

Ecology

Widespread in semi-arid Africa in a wide range of soil types and in different climates. In Ethiopia it occurs in Dry, Moist and Wet Weyna Dega agroclimatic zones. It does well on occasionally waterlogged land in Tigray, Gonder, Welo, Shoa, Arsi, Harerge, Sidamo, and Gamo Gofa regions, up to 2,600 m.

Uses

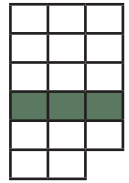
Firewood, charcoal, timber (construction), posts, utensils, food (pods for flavouring, boiled seeds), medicine (bark), fodder (pods, leaves), shade, mulch, nitrogen fixation, soil conservation, soil improvement, windbreak, tannin, dye, soap, fence (cut branches).

Description

A large leafy tree 15–30 m, with a wide rounded crown when mature, sometimes deciduous. BARK: Grey-brown, rough; young twigs pale grey and zigzag. THORNS: Straight to 2 cm long. LEAVES: Compound, 3–10 pairs of pinnae, leaflets round tipped, grey-green, little dot glands just visible where the pinnae grow out of the leaf stalk. FLOWERS: In dense creamy spikes about

10 cm long, very fragrant.

FRUIT: Pods conspicuous bright orange to red-brown, twisted and curled, thick, hard and shiny, to 25 cm long by 3.5 cm wide, containing 10–20 seeds which ripen at the end of the dry season. Pods do not split open but rot on the ground to release seed. Seedlings have leaves like those of mature trees—an aid to identification.



Propagation

Seedlings, direct sowing at site.

Seed

7,500–10,000 seed per kg. Germination 60–90% within 5–20 days.

Treatment: Pour boiling water over seed, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours. Alternatively, nick the seed at the distal (cotyledon) end.

Storage: Can be stored indefinitely if kept cool, dry, and insect free. The seed are, however, very susceptible to insect attack, so in practice avoid storage.

Management

Slow initial growth, later fairly fast growing on good sites; lopping, pollarding.

Remarks

The species is sometimes called *Faidherbia albida* because so many of its parts are unlike those of any other Acacia. It is intercropped with sorghum, teff and millet. Deep-rooted so does not compete with food crops. Fallen pods, rich in protein, can also be eaten (people and livestock) at the beginning of the rains. At that time also fallen leaves provide mulch for crop growth.



Photo: Patrick Maundu

