

Faidherbia albida (Acacia albida)

Mimosoideae

Indigenous

Ar: Haraz
Hd: Ochea
Sh: Momon

Bl: Gerbesha
Km: Sola
Tg: Momona

Eng: Apple-ring acacia
Nr: Sola, Sora
Tr: Melmelet

- Ecology:** Widespread in semi-arid Africa on a wide range of soil types and in different climates. It does well on occasionally waterlogged land. In Eritrea, it grows from 500 to 2,600 m in the central and northern highlands and western lowlands, e.g. around Meraguz, Ailagundet, Tselema, Seharti, Begu, Nakfa, Bimbina and on the Hazemo plains.
- Uses:** **Firewood, charcoal**, posts, timber (construction), utensils, food (pods for flavouring, boiled seeds), medicine (bark), **fodder** (pods, leaves); **mulch**, soil conservation, **soil improvement**, nitrogen fixation, river-bank stabilization, shade, windbreak, fence (cut branches), tannin, dye, soap.
- Description:** A **large leafy tree** 15-30 m, wide **rounded crown** when mature, sometimes deciduous. **BARK:** Grey-brown, rough; **young twigs pale grey and zigzag**. **THORNS:** Straight to 2 cm long (shorter than *A. tortilis*). **LEAVES:** Compound, 3-10 pairs 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 35 cm long by 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.
- Seed:** No. of seeds per kg: 7,500-10,000.
- treatment:** Nick the seed or soak in water for 24 hours.
- storage:** Can be stored indefinitely if kept cool, dry and insect free; best in air-tight containers.
- Management:** Slow initial growth, later fairly fast growing on good sites; lopping, pollarding.
- Remarks:** The species is now called *Faidherbia albida* because so many of its parts are unlike those of any other Acacia. It is intercropped with sorghum and millet in West Africa. Deep-rooted so does not compete with food crops. Unlike many trees, *A. albida* is in leaf throughout the dry season so available to stock when other forage is in short supply. Fallen pods, rich in protein, can also be eaten at the beginning of the rains. At that time also fallen leaves provide mulch for crop growth.

