

Melia azedarach

Meliaceae

Western Asia, Himalayas

Eng: *Persian lilac*

Tg: *Melia*

TV: *Mini*

Ecology: A popular ornamental exotic long planted in the tropics and subtropics. Being drought-resistant the tree has been recommended for fuel and pole production in dry areas. It grows in most soils, both acidic and saline, 0-2,400 m. In Eritrea, it has been introduced as an ornamental and shade tree along roadsides in Dekemhare, Adi-quality and Mendefera town.

Uses: **Firewood, poles,** posts, timber (tool handles), medicine (bark), bee forage, **ornamental,** shade, windbreak.

Description: A small tree 5-6 m, but can reach 10 m, usually deciduous, with a thin trunk. **BARK:** Grey, smooth, later rough and brown, branchlets dotted with breathing pores. **LEAVES:** Compound, on branched stalks, **to 40 cm long,** up to 6 pairs of pinnae and **3-9 leaflets,** each one bright shiny green, narrow to 8 cm, the **edge irregularly toothed, the tip long and pointed.** **FLOWERS:** Fragrant in large **rounded clusters** to 25 cm, each flower with 5 pale purple-white petals and a **dark purple centre.** **FRUIT:** Fleshy yellow-orange, oval to 1.5 cm, persisting on the bare tree. Each fruit contains a **stone** with 4-6 dark brown seeds inside.

Propagation: Seedlings, wildings, direct sowing.

Seed: A prolific seeder. High germination rate: several seedlings germinate from each stone. No. of seeds per kg: 500-3,000.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Seed can be kept for some time if stored in a cool place.

Management: Fairly fast growing; pollarding, lopping, coppicing, pruning.

Remarks: The berries are extremely poisonous to human beings, livestock and poultry. Leaves are not browsed by livestock. An infusion of the leaves has an insecticidal effect and has been used to control insects on vegetables. The tree is moderately termite-resistant and provides quick shade and building poles. In good conditions it grows so many suckers that it may become a weedy nuisance.

