

Melia azedarach

Meliaceae

Western Asia, Himalayas

Eng: *Persian lilac*

Ecology

A popular exotic long planted in the tropics and sub-tropics. It is fairly drought-tolerant but may suffer attack from termites in dry areas. In Ethiopia it grows in most soils, both acidic and saline, in Bereha and Dry, Moist and Wet Kolla and Weyna Dega agroclimatic zones, 0–2,400 m.

Uses

Firewood, timber, tool handles, poles, posts, medicine (bark), bee forage, shade, ornamental, 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 at site.

Seed

The species is a prolific seeder. With a high germination rate; 500–3,000 stones per kg (average around 2,000), each stone with 4–6 seeds (multigerm). Pulp should be removed from the stones and the seed cleaned, but with minimal human exposure due to seed toxicity. The stones are sown intact since it is difficult to separate the seed. Sow in seed bed, after germination the several young seedlings from each stone can be separated and pricked out in pots. Alternatively, sow in pots and remove excess young seedlings, leaving only the strongest one.

Treatment: Not necessary but soaking in cold water for up to three days may hasten germination, peak germination in 20 – 23 days.

Storage: Seed can be kept for some time but fresh seed gives best result.

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. In good conditions it has been reported to become a weedy nuisance in some countries.



