

# ***Morus alba***

Moraceae



## **China**

**Am:** *Yeferenji injori*

**Eng:** *Mulberry*

## **Ecology**

A tree native to warm temperate Asia, probably of mountainous China where it can reach more than 20 m. Now widely cultivated in Africa where it is much smaller, sometimes naturalized. It tolerates drought and heat once established. In Ethiopia, it is grown in Dry, Moist and Wet Kolla and Weyna Dega agroclimatic zones in Shoa, Ilubabor and Sidamo, 1,300–2,300 m.

## **Uses**

Firewood, food (fruit, leaves), fodder (leaves), bee forage, shade, ornamental, soil conservation, windbreak, live fence, silkworms' feed (leaves).

## **Description**

Usually small but can reach 25 m; loosely rounded in shape. LEAVES: Very variable in shape, even on one branch; oval to 3-lobed or heart shaped, 5–15 cm long, 3 veins from the base, edge roughly toothed, tip pointed, on stalks to 5 cm, upper leaf smooth, but some hairs on veins below at least. FLOWERS: Sexes separate, small and greenish, in drooping spikes. FRUIT: Compound, about 2 cm (- 5cm) long, pink to dark maroon, sweet and juicy.

## **Propagation**

Seedlings, cuttings.

## **Seed**

Poor germination. 325,000–700,000 seed per kg.

**Treatment:** Soak in cold water for 48 hours.

**Storage:** Can be stored for a long time.

## **Management**

Fast growing, especially when grown from cuttings. Lopping to encourage branching and keeping the height as required.

## **Remarks**

Experiments on the rearing of silkworms in Nazareth have shown good results and could be expanded to the Jimma area where the tree is abundant. It is a useful species for stabilizing soil-conservation structures. Trees grown from cuttings will produce fruits after 3 years as opposed to trees grown from seed which take 5–8 years. *M. nigra*, black mulberry, although widely cultivated for its black fruit in the Middle East is rare in Ethiopia. Both *Morus* species are found in Africa, often naturalized.

