

# *Prosopis juliflora*

Fabaceae



## Central America, Mexico

**Am:** *Prosopis*

**Eng:** *Algarroba, Mesquite*

### Ecology

A thorny shrub or tree cultivated all over the tropics. It grows well in arid regions, producing deep roots and tolerating sandy, rocky or poor and saline soils. It is a useful tree in Bereha and Dry, Moist and Wet Kolla and Weyna Dega agroclimatic zones. In eastern parts of Ethiopia (Afar plains, eastern Welo, eastern Shoa and Harerge), it has become a noxious weed, for example in irrigation schemes and other wet places in hot areas. It does well in 300-1900 m above sea level.

### Uses

Firewood, charcoal, timber, posts, carving, food (fruit, leaves), fodder (leaves, pods), bee forage, medicine, shade, soil conservation, nitrogen fixation, windbreak, live fence.

### Description

Often a shrub, but can become a shapely tree to 15 m, though usually 3–5 m. The bole short, young branches smooth green. BARK: Thick, rough green-grey, scaly with age. Some with pairs of thorns to 5 cm. LEAVES: Compound with 2–3 pairs of pinnae, stalks to 6 cm, leaflets oblong narrow, 1.5 cm long, no terminal leaflet. FLOWERS: Gold-yellow, densely crowded in spikes 5–10 cm, fragrant. FRUIT: Yellow pod, 10–20 cm (more brittle than *P. chilensis*), sweeter, darker; 10–20 hard seeds inside, difficult to extract.

### Propagation

Seedlings, direct sowing at site.

### Seed

Germination 40–80%. 30,000–35,000 seed per kg. Seeds can be extracted by exposing pods to termites or soaking in water.

**Treatment:** Not necessary.

**Storage:** Seed stores well both in pods and when extracted as it is not attacked by insects.

### Management

Fairly fast growing; capable of becoming a noxious weed on wetter sites. Space widely and follow strict management with regards to reduction of multiple stems and continued removal of lower branches to get clear bole and easy passage between trees. Use strict coppice reduction and management techniques.

### Remarks

Sets seed after 3–4 years. A thorny shrub or tree with a great many variants and closely related species causing some confusion in identification. Unlike *P. chilensis*, young shoots are brown. It also grows faster and competes with crops. The sweet pods contain both glucose and protein so are valuable as fodder. The hard, dense wood burns with great heat.

