

Salvadora persica

Salvadoraceae

Indigenous

Af: *Dadabo*

Ag: *Shwelsba*

Am: *Aday, Yeharer-mefaqya*

Eng: *Toothbrush tree*

Nur: *Gegi*

Sm: *Aday, Aras, Rumei*

Tg: *Hadai*

Ecology

Widespread all over dryland Africa and the driest parts of India. Occurs in thorn scrub, on desert flood plains and in grassy savannah, even on alkaline soils in Bereha and Dry and Moist Kolla agroclimatic zones of Afar plains, Shewa, Hararge, Sidamo, Gamo Gofa, and Kefa, 0–1,350 m. It is very drought resistant. An important indicator of saline soils, even though it prefers sandy-clay soils in water courses. Very drought resistant, tolerates areas with less than 200 mm annual rainfall. Riverine in very dry areas.

Uses

Firewood, food (fruit), medicine (latex, stem, roots), fodder (fruit, leaves), shade, soil conservation, toothbrushes.

Description

An evergreen trailing shrub or small tree, 3–7 m, young flexible branches, pendulous, older wood twisted; branches often hanging. BARK: Smooth and pale, later brown and corky. LEAVES: Yellow-green, dull, rather fleshy but hard with rough gland dots and raised veins, oblong to rounded, to 5 cm long. FLOWERS: In loose heads, to 10 cm, small, white. FRUIT:

White, then pink to purple, 1 cm, one seeded, juicy and strongly flavoured, sweet but peppery.



Propagation

Seedlings, sow seed in pots.

Seed

About 3,400 seed per kg. Germination commonly 40-50 %.

Treatment: Fruit pulp should be removed and seed washed in water before sowing. Soaking in lukewarm water for 24–72 hours may hasten germination. Soaked, de-pulped seed may germinate in 24 hours.

Storage: Seed can be stored for about a month.

Management

Slow growing. Produces root suckers. Trees for shade should be planted near other trees such as *Acacia tortilis* for support. Pollarding for fodder and to produce short stems to be harvested for toothbrushes.

Remarks

An important fodder species for dry areas when nothing else is available as the shoots can be browsed all year by cattle, sheep, goats and camels — but milk may be flavoured. A kitchen salt can be produced from the ash of wood and leaves. The fruit are attractive to monkeys and birds. The bark contains an antibiotic that keeps the mouth clean and helps to prevent tooth decay. The fruits are eaten whole and have a slightly hot taste.



Photo: Patrick Maundu



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