

Tamarix aphylla

Tamaricaceae

Indigenous

Af: Segeito
Hd: Weama
Km: Shilla
Tg: Ubel

Ar: AM
Eng: Athel tree, leafless tamarisk, salt cedar, tamarisk
Nr: Ubel
Tr: Ubel

Bl: Ubela
Sh: Segel

Ecology: This family, mainly of shrubs, is centred in the Mediterranean area. The species *T. aphylla* is a tree of humid lowland savannah and woodlands as well as open floodplains and along rivers. It is common in the Middle East, extending to north-west India. In Eritrea it is usually found with *Faidherbia albida*, *Balanites* and *Tamarindus*, 0-1,700 m. Common on open flood plains and on riverbanks in most lowland parts of Eritrea, particularly around Zara, Rihib, Wojeba, Tekreret, Lesse gurja, Ubel, Haikota, Sheib and Dogali.

Uses: **Firewood, charcoal**, timber (general purposes), **fodder** (leafy branchlets), mulch, soil conservation, soil improvement, dune fixation, **river-bank stabilization**, windbreak, firebreak.

Description: A well-branched evergreen shrub or tree to 9 m. The **irregular grey-green crown** is rather like that of a conifer. **BARK:** Light grey to red-brown, becoming **thick and rough, deeply ridged**. Branches smooth purple-brown. **LEAVES:** Sprays of **slender green-grey branchlets** or twigs, very drought hardy, have the function of usual green leaves. Leaves remain as 2 mm scales, encircling the branchlets, each with a sharp tip and appearing as one section along the **jointed twig**. **FLOWERS:** At the tips of **branchlets**, about **15 cm long**, each one less than 3 mm, **pink-white**, with 5 floral parts. **FRUIT:** Many narrow pointed **capsules**, 5 mm, splitting into 3 to release tiny **brown seeds** each with a **tuft of white hairs**.

Propagation: From cuttings of the previous year's growth, wildings.

Seed:

treatment:

storage:

Seeds lose viability within a few days so trees are normally established by cuttings.

Management: Coppicing.

Remarks: Like other tamarisk, it excretes "salt" which drips from glands in the leaves at night so soil below may be covered with salt. This salty drip kills any plants below the tree and the fallen leaves are too salty to burn—hence use of this tree as a firebreak. Crops should not be planted close to tamarisk as the tree roots collect all nearby water and plant nutrients.

