

Ziziphus spina-christi

Rhamnaceae

Indigenous

Af: *Kusrto*
Hd: *Tghaba*
Sh: *Kusurto*

Ar: *Sidr*
Km: *Aseba*
Tg: *Gaba*

Bl: *Guff*
Nr: *Hamburi, Mulgi*
Tr: *Kuslet*

Ecology: A spiny shrub which grows in the Sahel from Senegal to the Sudan and Arabia in wooded grasslands, on flooded river banks and at edges of cultivation. It prefers alluvial plains with deep soil. It occurs throughout Eritrea, 0-1,900 **m**.

Uses: **Firewood, charcoal**, timber (spear shafts, roof beams, furniture, utensils), **food** (fruit), fodder (fruit, leaves), shade, live fence, **fence** (cut branches), river-bank stabilization.

Description: A **thorny shrub becoming a tree to 10 m**, evergreen on wet sites but losing all its leaves in a long dry season. The tree lives a long time. **BARK:** Grey-brown, when cut the edge is reddish, mature bark grooved and cracking. The paired spines are "thumb pointer", the straight thorns long and thin. **Branchlets yellow-white**, somewhat zigzag. **LEAVES:** Rather small, **narrowly ovate**, variable in length, 1-8 **cm**, shortly stalked, usually narrowed to the base where **each side is similar**, 3 clear veins from the base, the edge lightly toothed. **FLOWERS:** Small, 10-25 in heads beside leaves, **yellow-green, stalks and calyx hairy white**. **FRUIT:** Round, 1-2 cm, woolly at first, ripening yellow to red, with edible flesh and 2-3 seeds.

Propagation: Seedlings, cuttings.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: 1,000-2,000.

treatment: The hard woody shells should be cracked with a hammer and the seeds soaked in warm water overnight.

storage: Stores well.

Management: Coppicing, lopping, pollarding.

Remarks: It develops an extremely deep taproot system. It can make an impenetrable thicket. The wood makes excellent firewood and charcoal. It coppices very well. Seeds are sold in markets and thus it is a source of income for rural communities.

