Ziziphus jujuba
Chinese Date

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

INTRODUCTION

Chinese Jujube is an interesting deciduous tree with spiny, gnarled branches and an open, irregular form (Fig. 1). Growing at a moderate pace, Chinese Jujube reaches anywhere from 15 to 35 feet in height with a spread of 10 to 30 feet and can be trained to a single trunk. Most unpruned plants grow with several trunks. The mottled gray/black bark is rough and shaggy. The one to two-inch-long leaves have a paler underside and sharp spines at the base of each leaf. Fall color is often a showy yellow, but not consistent. In spring, small clusters of yellow or white, fragrant blossoms appear, hidden in foliage between the leaf and stems. The one-inch-long green fruits ripen to dark red and finally black. Eaten either fresh, candied, canned, or dried like dates, these fruits are quite sweet. Even young, two-year-old trees are able to produce these delectable treats but be forewarned that these fruits can create quite a litter problem. Locate the tree so the fruit drops in a mulch bed or on the lawn, not on a sidewalk, patio or driveway.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Ziziphus jujuba*

Pronunciation: ZIZ ih-fuss joo JOO buh

Common name(s): Chinese Date, Common Jujube, Chinese Jujube

Family: *Rhamnaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 6 through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: fruit tree; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

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2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.
DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 35 feet
Spread: 10 to 30 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: oval; round
Crown density: open
Growth rate: medium
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: crenate; serrulate
Leaf shape: lanceolate; ovate
Leaf venation: bowed
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: yellow
Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow
Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval; round
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: black; red
Fruit characteristics: attracts squirrels and other mammals; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; thorns are present on the trunk or branches
Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: brown
**Current year twig thickness:** medium

**Culture**

*Light requirement:* tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

*Soil tolerances:* clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained

*Drought tolerance:* high

**Other**

*Roots:* surface roots are usually not a problem

*Winter interest:* no special winter interest

*Outstanding tree:* not particularly outstanding

*Invasive potential:* No entries found.

*Verticillium wilt susceptibility:* not known to be susceptible

*Pest resistance:* unknown

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Chinese Jujube should be grown in full sun or partial shade on any well-drained soil, acid or alkaline. Plants do not do well on heavy clay or swampy soils.

Propagation is by seed, suckers, or grafting. Young plants transplant easily.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.