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. 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: 6A through 9B (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Invasive potential: invasive non-native
Uses: fruit
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree
**Description**

Height: 15 to 35 feet  
Spread: 10 to 30 feet  
Crown uniformity: irregular  
Crown shape: round, oval  
Crown density: open  
Growth rate: moderate  
Texture: fine

**Foliage**

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

**Flower**

Flower color: yellow  
Flower characteristics: not showy

**Fruit**

Fruit shape: oval, round  
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch  
Fruit covering: fleshy  
Fruit color: red, black  
Fruit characteristics: attracts squirrels/mammals; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; not showy; typically one trunk; no thorns  
Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure  
Breakage: resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown  
**Current year twig thickness:** medium  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

**Culture**

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade  
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained  
Drought tolerance: high  
Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

**Other**

Roots: not a problem  
Winter interest: no  
Outstanding tree: no  
Ozone sensitivity: unknown  
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant  
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.