Ziziphus jujuba: Chinese Date

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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

Figure 1. Young Ziziphus jujuba: Chinese Date
Credits: Ed Gilman

Figure 2. Range
**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

**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.