

Meliaceae-Mahogany family

## *MELIA AZEDARACH* L. Chinaberry

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Other common names.-china-tree, bead tree, Indian lilac, pride-of-India, umbrella chinaberry, umbrella-tree.

Growth habit, occurrence, and use.-Chin berry is a short-lived deciduous tree, native to southern Asia and Australia, which reaches a maximum height of 50 feet. It has been cultivated since the sixteenth century, chiefly for ornamental purposes and has become naturalized in most tropical and subtropical countries including the southern United States. In India the wood is used for furniture, agricultural implements, and the manufacture of writing and printing paper (3). Extracts of the leaves and fruits have insecticidal properties (1), and the fruits are valuable for livestock and game food. Primary values for chinaberry in this country are for shade trees, timber, and wildlife food.

Flowering and fruiting.-The flowering habit is either perfect or polygamo-dioecious (4). The pretty, lilac-colored perfect flowers are borne in axillary panicles 4 to 6 inches long in March to May. The fruit is a subglobose, fleshy, round

drupe which ripens in September and October and persists on the tree well into winter. It turns yellow and wrinkled as it ripens (fig. 1). Inside of the fleshy mesocarp is a single, fluted, light brown stone which contains 4 to 5 pointed, smooth, black seeds (figs. 2 and 3). Abundant seed crops are borne almost annually.

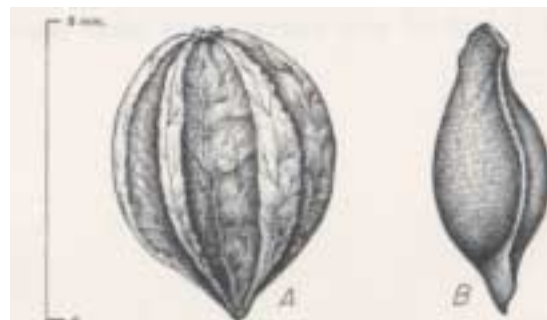


FIGURE 2. *Melia azedarach*, chinaberry: A, stone, and B, seed; 5 X.

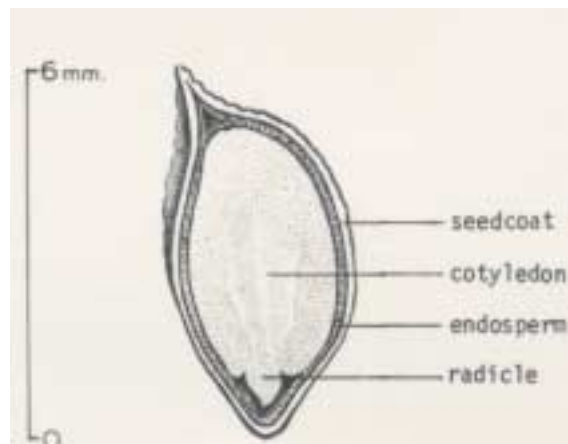


FIGURE 3. *Melia azedarach*, chinaberry: longitudinal section through a seed, 8 X.

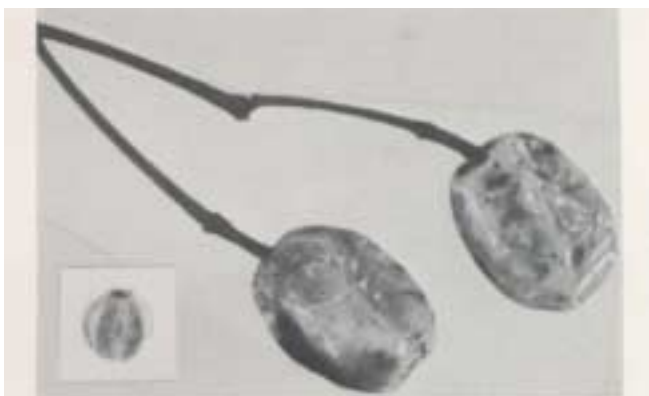


FIGURE 1. *Melia azedarach*, chinaberry: fruit and stone, 1 X.

Southern Forest Exp. Stn.

## MELIA

Collection, extraction, and storage of seeds.

Fruits can be collected by hand after the leaves have fallen in late autumn or early winter. They may be either run wet through a macerator and the pulp floated off or screened out, or the entire fruits may be planted immediately. There are about 640 fruits per pound (7 samples). Under ordinary dry conditions fruits may be stored for at least a year without loss of viability (5).

Germination tests.-Pregermination treatments are not necessary (2, 5). In nature the epigeous germination usually occurs during the spring following dispersal. One fruit may produce up to 4 seedlings. Suggested germination test conditions are 70° F. (night) to 85° F. (day) for 60 days with 200 seeds per test in sand flats (5). Fresh stones from southeastern Arkansas had a germinative capacity of 81 percent at 90 days in sand flats in a greenhouse; germinative energy was 54 percent at 30 days (2).

Nursery practice.-Stones are usually sown intact immediately after collection in the fall or in the following spring. They should be sown 2 to 3 inches apart in drills and covered with about 1 inch of soil. Germination takes place

about 3 weeks after a spring sowing. As planting stock, one-year-old seedlings are preferred. Older stock should be top-and-root pruned. Chinaberry may also be propagated from cuttings and root suckers and by direct seeding (5).

### Literature Cited

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