

# Ziziphus jujuba: Chinese Date<sup>1</sup>

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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

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## 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

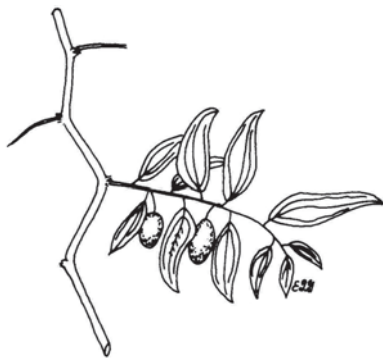


Figure 3.

## 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.