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### *Albizia julibrissin*

[Synonyms : *Acacia julibrissin*, *Acacia mollis*, *Acacia nemu*, *Albizia julibrissin* var. *julibrissin*, *Albizzia julibrissin*, *Feuilleea julibrissin*, *Mimosa arborea*, *Mimosa julibrissin*, *Sericandra julibrissin*]

**SILK TREE** is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native from Iran to Japan it has brush-like heads of tiny fragrant, greenish-white or pink flowers with protruding, pale to deep pink stamens. It is also known as *Acacia*, *Albizia de Constantinopla* (Portuguese), *Albizie* (German), *Albizzia* (French), *Arbre de soie* (French), *Árvore da Seda* (Portuguese), *Kalkora* (Bengali), *Lal siris* (Hindi), *Mimosa*, *Nallasinduga* (Telugu), *Nemu tree*, *Persian acacia*, *Persian silk tree*, *Pink mimosa*, *Pink siris tree*, *Schirmakazie* (German), *Schlafbaum* (German), *Seidenbaum* (German), *Seidenkazie* (German), *Seidenrosenbaum* (German), *Silkesträd* (Swedish), *Silk tree mimosa*, and *Sirin* (Punjabi).

The green leaflets fold at night.

*Julibrissin* is derived from a local name.

Young leaves have provided a savoury flavouring, while the flowers have been cooked as a vegetable. A substitute tea has been made from the dried leaves.

The seeds can remain dormant for over 100 years. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War the herbarium of the British Museum in London was damaged in air raids in 1942. The fire brigade had to hose the building and some 147 year old silk tree seeds stored there got soaked and started to germinate.

The tree is planted along roadsides for its shade and it has also been grown as an ornamental plant.

Locally the silk tree's leaves and seeds have provided cattle fodder, and the powdered dark grey bark has been used as a soap.

The hard and fairly durable, brown wood has been made into furniture and also railway carriages and wagons.

Medicinally, the tree's bark has been used in Chinese medicine and is referred to in a 2,000 year old Chinese herbal. The stem bark and dried flowers have been used to treat insomnia and the latter have also been taken for memory loss and as a digestive aid and tonic. The stem bark and a gummy substance obtained from the plant have been applied to wounds, boils and sprains as well.