

Albizia lebbbeck

[Synonyms : *Acacia lebbbeck*, *Albizia kalkora*, *Feuilleea lebbbeck*, *Mimosa lebbbeck*, *Mimosa lebbek*, *Mimosa sirissa*, *Mimosa speciosa*]

EAST INDIAN WALNUT is a deciduous tree. Native from tropical Asia to northern Australia (especially India), it has brush-like heads of tiny fragrant, greenish-yellow or white flowers with protruding, yellowish-white stamens.

It is also known as *Acacia amarilla*, *Acacia tree*, *Barba de caballero* (Venezuelan), Barbados ebony, *Barhām* (Arabic), *Bois noir* (Seychellois), Common shack-shack, *Dirasana* (Telugu), *Dormilon* (Colombian), Frywood, Indian siris, Indian walnut, *Khago* (Thai), *Ki toke* (Sundanese), *Kokko* (Indian), *Lebbbeck* (Arabic, English), *Lebbek tree*, *Mara* (Singhalese), *Mataratón* (Panamanian), *Shak-shak*, *Shirish* (Gujarati), *Siris* (Bengali, Hindi), *Siris tree*, *Tekik* (Javanese), *Tibit tree*, *Vahai* (Tamil), *Woman's tongue tree*, and *Ye-ho-shu* (Chinese).

The fruit pods (which remain when the leaves have dropped) rattle in a breeze.

Warning – the fruit are poisonous, and sawdust from worked wood can cause sneezing from irritation in the eyes, nose and throat.

Lebbbeck for some authorities recalls a place in Egypt where an avenue of East Indian walnut (*Albizia lebbbeck*) was planted.

East Indian walnut trees are often planted to control erosion as their roots are good at binding the soil. The trees (with fronds of pale green leaflets) are also grown for their shade, particularly in tea or coffee plantations and, like the silk tree (*Albizia julibrissin*), it is cultivated for its ornamental qualities too.

Locally the fallen leaves provide a green manure and fodder, the latter especially relished by water buffalo and cattle.

The light grey bark has been used for tanning and dyeing, and in Java (now an Indonesian island) particularly as a detergent for washing material.

The wood (which has hard and durable, golden brown heartwood) has been collected for firewood. Heavier than walnut (*Juglans regia*) and thus unsuitable for say rifle stocks, it has nevertheless been compared with it favourably by some authorities as an alternative for other uses. Apart from general construction and furniture East Indian walnut wood has also been used for flooring and to make a wide range of items including agricultural equipment such as wagons, boats, toys, sugarcane crushers and picture frames. The timber has also provided an export commodity for some countries and it has been used by the Chinese for the central doors of Confucian temples.

Medicinally, leaves and the seed oil have been used in local remedies for eye ailments. The seed oil has also been used in the treatment of leprosy, the flowers have been added to poultices, and the bark has been chosen for treating boils, as well as dysentery and piles.