

Ceratonia siliqua

[Synonyms : *Ceratonia coriacea*, *Ceratonia inermis*]

CAROB is an evergreen shrub or tree. Of uncertain origin, possibly Oman on the south-eastern Arabian peninsular, it has red catkin-like clusters.

It is also known as *Alfarrobeira* (Portuguese), *Alfarrobeira* (Portuguese), *Algaroba* (Spanish), *Algarroba* (Spanish), Algarroba bean, *Algarrobo* (Canary Island, Spanish), *Algarrobo europeo* (Argentinian, Chilean, Peruvian, Spanish), *Al-kharoubah* (Arabic), *Barcello dolce* (Italian), *Barcello dolci* (Italian), *Barcello greco* (Italian), Carob-tree, Caroub beans, *Caroube* (French), *Caroubier* (French), Caroub pods, Caroub sugar-pods, *Carruba* (Italian), *Carrubio* (Italian), *Carrubo* (Italian), *Caruba* (Slovakian), *Chang jiao dou* (Chinese), *Chleb świętojański* (Polish), *Drzewo karobowe* (Polish), *Echter Johannisbrotbaum* (German), *Gelenggang* (Malay), *Guainella* (Italian), *Harnub* (Turkish), *Harnup* (Turkish), *Harruba* (Maltese), *Haruv* (Hebrew), *Haruv matzuy* (Hebrew), *Inago mame* (Japanese), *Johanneksenleipäpuu* (Finnish), *Johannesbröd* (Swedish), *Johannesbrödträd* (Swedish), *Johannesbroldtræ* (Danish), *Johannisbrot* (German), *Johannisbrotbaum* (German), John's bread, *Karnoob* (Arabic), *Karob* (Czech, Polish, Slovakian), *Karobenbaum* (German), *Karube* (German), *Keçiboynuzu* (Turkish), *Keçi buynuzu ağ* (Turkish), *Kharnub* (Hindi, Punjabi), *Kharoupi* (Greek), *Kharoupiá* (Greek), *Kharrûb* (Arabic), Locust bean, Locust pods, Locust tree, *Pane di Santo Giovanni* (Italian), *Raues Hornblatt* (German), *Rohovník obecný* (Czech), *Rohovník obyčejný* (Slovakian), *Rohovníky* (Czech), *Rozhovoe derevo* (Russian), St. John's bread, *Siliqua di Levante* (Italian), Sugar pods, *Svätojánskeho chleba* (Slovakian), *Svatojánský chléb* (Czech), *Svätojánsky chlieb* (Slovakian), *Szarańczyn strąkowy* (Polish), *Szentjánoskenyér* (Hungarian), *Szentjánoskenyérfa* (Hungarian), *Tseratoniia* (Russian), and *Xylokeratiá* (Greek).

A flour and gum are extracted from the seeds.

Siliqua is Latin meaning 'husk, pod or shell'.

The ancient Egyptians used the fruit to make wine, and they also fed their cattle on the plant.

The carob is said to have played a significant part in both Jewish and Christian religions. Some authorities suggest that in the parable of the Prodigal Son, when the straying sibling feeds 'husks' to the swine before returning home, the 'husks' referred to could have been carob fruit. It was also a tradition that in the 1st Century AD St. John, one of the twelve apostles, survived on carob fruit (they were thought to be the 'locusts' referred to in the Christian *New Testament*) during his period of fasting in the wilderness).

The seeds are said to have been jewellers' original carat weights, and are also believed to have been used by druggists for weighing their ingredients.

When the British, under Wellington (1769-1852) were fighting Napoleon's brother, Joseph Bonaparte (1768-1844) in Spain in the Summer of 1813, the British cavalry fed their horses on the beans they found growing locally. Today in the United States these fruit are used for making dog biscuits – and they also provide animal fodder in tropical Africa and Asia.

The hard and shiny, pinkish hued wood yields a khaki dye, and has also been used locally for making carts and furniture.

The seeds are crushed and made into a pancake in the Kabylia region of North Africa. In some parts of Austria, the seeds have provided a coffee substitute, known as Carob coffee. The fruit, which have been a source of human food in times of famine, have recently acquired a considerable reputation worldwide as a chocolate substitute that, unlike chocolate (*Theobroma cacao*), contains no stimulants.

The bark, wood, stems, fruit and gum are all used commercially today. The seed gum is known by many different names, including Carob gum, Gum gatto, Gum hevo, Locust bean gum and Tragasol. For example the drinks industry uses the stems for an alcoholic drink. Flour from the seeds is an ingredient for the food industry in stock cubes, and a cocoa-flavoured drink, as well as providing a setting agent for jams – and Carob gum is used as a stabilizer and thickener eg. ice cream and sauces. Both flour and gum are used by the cosmetics and toiletry industries. For the textile industry the gum is to be found in sizes and finishing agents for material and is also used with dyes. The gum is used to make inks. Fruit flesh is an ingredient in animal feedstuffs. Wood is used for marquetry and turning, and is made into walking sticks as well. A bark extract is employed in the preparation of leather. Seedless fruit pods provide fodder for both cattle and horses. Carob powder is available for domestic use in some countries as a food and flavouring. Medicinally, the fruit is used to counter diarrhoea and treat catarrh, and is believed by some to improve the voice.