

Pistacia terebinthus

TEREBINTH PISTACHE is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to the Mediterranean (from Spain to Turkey and Morocco to Egypt) it has tiny edible reddish-purple maturing to brown nutlet fruit.

It is also known as Chian turpentine tree, Chian turpentine, China turpentine tree, *Cornalheira* (Portuguese), *Cornicabra* (Spanish), Cyprus turpentine tree, Gum mastic, *Kabuli mustaki* (Hindi), Mastic, *Řečik terebinthový* (Czech), *Tärpättipistaasi* (Finnish), Teil tree, Terebinte, Terebinth, *Terebinthe* (German), *Térébinthe* (French), *Terebinto* (Esperanto, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish), *Terpentinpistazie* (German), Turpentine tree, Wild pistachio, and *Zmardháli* (Greek).

Bark and wood yield an important source of turpentine. It has been called Chian turpentine or Cyprus turpentine and under the former name is still used today. The seeds (nuts) yield an edible oil.

Terebinthus is derived from a Greek name for this species and its resin (possibly pre-dating ancient Greece) *terebinthos* with reference to turpentine.

In Cypriot villages the ripe wrinkled brown fruit have been used to bake a traditional bread. In some places when the fruit are still unripe they have been marinated in salt and vinegar, stems and all, for a relish to eat with drinks. The seed has been eaten raw or cooked – and the cooked young leaflets have been served as a vegetable..

The long horn-like, reddish-brown galls are used for tanning and they yield a red dye.

The turpentine obtained from the reddish-brown bark and the wood was considered to be the best when the Greek philosopher Theophrastus (c.372-c.287 BC) was alive. European oil painters used it and the name ‘Chian turpentine’ originally indicated to Europeans (who imported it for use in making wine, perfumes and medicines) that most of the turpentine was coming from trees tapped on the Greek island of Chios (Khios) not from eastern Europe or western Asia.

According to Theophrastus this hard wood was used to make dagger handles in Syria. In more recent times it has been used for marquetry and making furniture.

Medicinally, local herbalists have used the galls and resin in treatments including internal remedies for asthma and other lung problems, internal bleeding, urinary disorders, worms and rheumatism. They have also been applied externally for treating gout, lice and rheumatic pain. Chian turpentine has been used in treating cancer.