

# Diospyros mespiliformis

*Ebenaceae*

Indigenous

Ar: *Jughan*

Bl: *Aira*

Eng: *African ebony*

Hd: *Iriab*

Km: *Sowa*

Sh: *Aito*

Tg: *Aye*

Tr: *Tselim airo*

**Ecology:** An evergreen tree of medium- to low-altitude woodlands, widespread in Africa. In Eritrea it grows mostly on rocky hillsides in lowland savannah, Euphorbia thickets and along river banks, 700-1,600 m, e.g. in Jengeren valley, around Semenawi-bahri, Gedmai, Dongolo, Mutsub valley, Hazemo plains, Kenafena and Mai-lam.

**Uses:** **Firewood, timber** (construction, furniture), **carving**, utensils (pestles and mortar), food (fruit: dry, fresh, fermented drink), medicine (bark, roots, fruit), bee forage, **shade**, walking sticks.

**Description:** A medium to large tree, to 25 m. There may be a tall clear bole from a buttressed base to the dense rounded crown. Young parts have silvery hairs. **BARK: Grey-black, rough and squared, grooved.** **LEAVES: Alternate, shiny dark green, to 14 x 3 cm, the midrib raised below, edge wavy, tip rounded.** **FLOWERS:** Fragrant, male clustered, female solitary, cream-white petals, 1 cm long. **FRUIT: Rounded to 2.5 cm in a calyx cup, the 5 segments curling back,** fruit yellow, later purplish, pulp soft and sweet with 4-6 brown, hairy seeds.

**Propagation:** Seedlings.

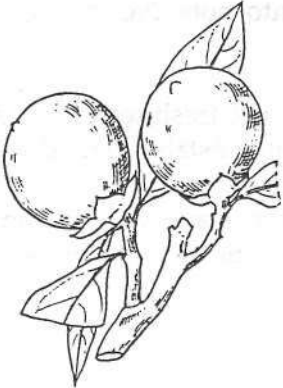
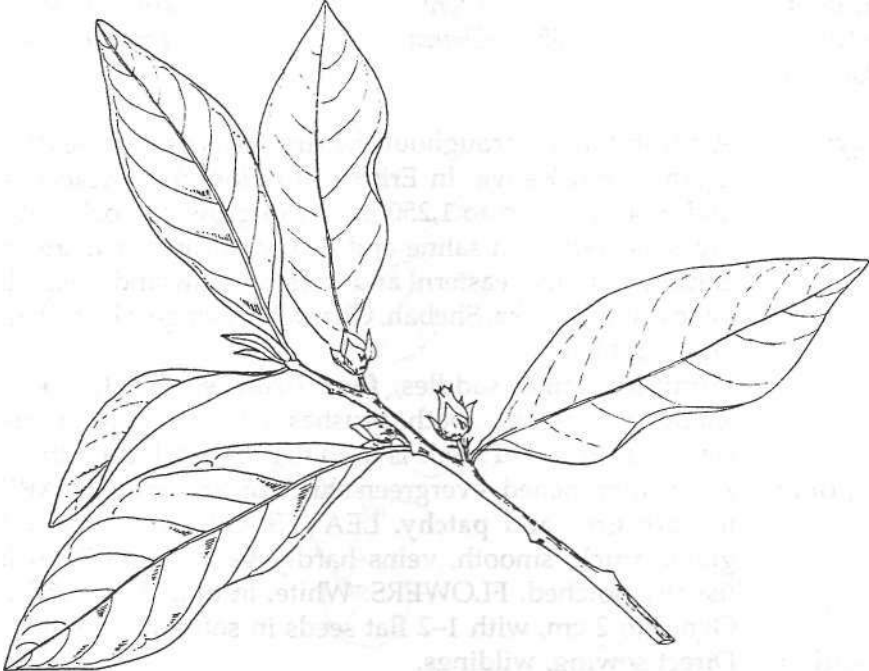
**Seed:** Good germination. No. of seeds per kg: 2,700-3,200.

**treatment:** Not necessary.

**storage:** Seed can be stored for very long periods.

**Management:** Pruning, coppicing, pollarding.

**Remarks:** Slow growing. *Diospyros* spp. produce valuable black heartwood, "ebony". Only a few trees yield the black wood after felling. Pale at first, the timber gradually becomes dark brown. The wood is hard and tough with a fine grain and is fungus and termite resistant.



DAMTEW T.

