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## Pistacia terebinthus - L.

<b>Common Name</b>	Terebinth, Cyprus turpentine
<b>Family</b>	<b>Pistaciaceae</b>
<b>Synonyms</b>	
<b>Known Hazards</b>	None known
<b>Habitats</b>	Dry open woods and scrub[45], usually in calcareous soils[50].
<b>Range</b>	Europe - Mediterranean.
<b>Edibility Rating</b>	
<b>Medicinal Rating</b>	
<b>Care</b>	2



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### Summary

### Physical Characteristics



Pistacia terebinthus is a deciduous Tree growing to 9 m (29ft) by 6 m (19ft) at a slow rate.

It is hardy to zone (UK) 9. It is in flower from May to July, and the seeds ripen from Oct to November. The flowers are dioecious (individual flowers are either male or female, but only one sex is to be found on any one plant so both male and female plants must be grown if seed is required) The plant is not self-fertile.

USDA hardiness zone : 8-11

Suitable for: light (sandy) and medium (loamy) soils and prefers well-drained soil. Suitable pH: acid, neutral and basic (alkaline) soils and can grow in very alkaline soils. It cannot grow in the shade. It prefers dry or moist soil and can tolerate drought.

### Habitats

Woodland Garden Sunny Edge;

### Edible Uses

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Edible Parts: [Fruit](#); [Leaves](#); [Oil](#); [Seed](#).  
Edible Uses: [Gum](#); [Oil](#).

Seed - raw or cooked[177]. Sweetish[183]. It is sweeter and oilier than an almond[2]. An edible oil is obtained from the seed[117, 183]. The immature fruits, including the stems, are preserved in vinegar and salt. Known as 'atsjaar', they are used as a relish to accompany wines served during meals[183]. The fruit is about 7mm long and 6 mm wide, it contains a single seed[200]. Young leaves - cooked and used as a vegetable[177, 183]. A resin from the trunk is used as a vegetable and as a chewing gum[177, 183].

## Medicinal Uses

*Plants For A Future can not take any responsibility for any adverse effects from the use of plants. Always seek advice from a professional before using a plant medicinally.*

### Cytostatic.

The resin obtained from this tree (see below for more details) is antiseptic, antispasmodic, cytostatic, expectorant and vulnerary[100, 238]. It is taken internally in the treatment of chronic bronchial infections, streptococcal, urinary and renal infections, haemorrhage, gallstones, tapeworm and rheumatism[238]. Externally, it is used to treat arthritis, gout, sciatica, scabies and lice[238]. It has also been used in the treatment of cancer[100].

## Other Uses

[Dye](#); [Gum](#); [Oil](#); [Resin](#); [Rootstock](#); [Tannin](#).

Yields the resin 'Cyprus turpentine', which is obtained from incisions made in the bark (not the trunk) of the tree[1, 2, 11, 46, 117, 200]. The incisions are made from mid summer to mid autumn[238]. It is mainly used medicinally in the treatment of cancer[100] and also as a chewing gum. The plant can be used as a rootstock for the pistachio nut, *P. vera*[11]. A red dye is obtained from galls that are formed on the leaves by aphids[100]. The plant is a source of tannin[46].



## Cultivation details

Requires a deep well-drained light soil[200], preferring a hot dry position in full sun[166]. It grows best in a sandy to stony alkaline soil[238]. This species is hardy in most of Britain but it is slow growing[1, 200]. This contradicts the report, also in [200], that this plant is only hardy to zone 9 and is therefore intolerant of anything other than the lightest frosts. Any pruning that needs to be done is best carried out in the spring[238]. Dioecious, male and female plants must be grown if seed is required.

## Propagation

Pre-soak the seed for 16 hours in alkalized water[78], or for 3 - 4 days in warm water[1], and sow late winter in a cold frame or greenhouse[78, 113]. Two months cold stratification may speed up germination, so it might be better to sow the seed in early winter[113]. The germination is variable and can be slow. Prick out the seedlings into individual pots when they are large enough to handle and grow on the plants for at least their first winter in a greenhouse. Plant out into their permanent positions in early summer and consider giving some protection from winter cold for their first year or two outdoors[K]. Cuttings of half-ripe wood from juvenile trees, July in a frame[113]. Layering.

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## Expert comment

### Author

L.

## Botanical References

1150200

## Links / References

[K] **Ken Fern** Notes from observations, tasting etc at Plants For A Future and on field trips.

[1]**F. Chittendon.** RHS Dictionary of Plants plus Supplement. 1956

Comprehensive listing of species and how to grow them. Somewhat outdated, it has been replaced in 1992 by a new dictionary (see [200]).

[2]**Hedrick. U. P.** Sturtevant's Edible Plants of the World.

Lots of entries, quite a lot of information in most entries and references.

[11]**Bean. W.** Trees and Shrubs Hardy in Great Britain. Vol 1 - 4 and Supplement.

A classic with a wealth of information on the plants, but poor on pictures.

[45]**Polunin. O.** Flowers of Greece and the Balkans.

A good pocket flora, it also lists quite a few plant uses.

[46]**Uphof. J. C. Th.** Dictionary of Economic Plants.

An excellent and very comprehensive guide but it only gives very short descriptions of the uses without any details of how to utilize the plants. Not for the casual reader.

[50]? Flora Europaea

An immense work in 6 volumes (including the index). The standard reference flora for Europe, it is very terse though and with very little extra information. Not for the casual reader.

[78]**Sheat. W. G.** Propagation of Trees, Shrubs and Conifers.

A bit dated but a good book on propagation techniques with specific details for a wide range of plants.

[100]**Polunin. O.** Flowers of Europe - A Field Guide.

An excellent and well illustrated pocket guide for those with very large pockets. Also gives some details on plant uses.

[113]**Dirr. M. A. and Heuser. M. W.** The Reference Manual of Woody Plant Propagation.

A very detailed book on propagating trees. Not for the casual reader.

[117]**Rosengarten, jnr. F.** The Book of Edible Nuts.

A very readable and comprehensive guide. Well illustrated.

[166]**Taylor, J.** The Milder Garden.

A good book on plants that you didn't know could be grown outdoors in Britain.

[177]**Kunkel, G.** Plants for Human Consumption.

An excellent book for the dedicated. A comprehensive listing of latin names with a brief list of edible parts.

[183]**Facciola, S.** Cornucopia - A Source Book of Edible Plants.

Excellent. Contains a very wide range of conventional and unconventional food plants (including tropical) and where they can be obtained (mainly N. American nurseries but also research institutes and a lot of other nurseries from around the world.

[200]**Huxley, A.** The New RHS Dictionary of Gardening. 1992.

Excellent and very comprehensive, though it contains a number of silly mistakes. Readable yet also very detailed.

[238]**Bown, D.** Encyclopaedia of Herbs and their Uses.

A very well presented and informative book on herbs from around the globe. Plenty in it for both the casual reader and the serious student. Just one main quibble is the silly way of having two separate entries for each plant.

## Readers comment

Elizabeth H.

**Dr. Sourav Chandra** Fri Nov 2 2007

I need a detailed research work done on the plants extract

Elizabeth H.

**Patrick McCoy** Mon Jul 13 2009

I need seeds to conduct research on the plant, can anyone provide seeds or cuttings?

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