



Balanites aegyptiaca

Family name: **Zygophyllaceae**Common name: **Zygophyllaceae**

Local name: (لالوب-هجليج) Higlieeg or Laloab

**Wild, Native**

Role in Biodiversity

Balanites aegyptiaca is an important arid and semiarid zones species. It tolerates livestock activity, and wildfire, provides shade, food, and shelter for many animal species, and helps in erosion control by dune stabilization.



Environment and Growing

This species is well adapted to grow in a wide range of habitats, soil types from fine sands to heavy clay, and climatic moisture levels. It grows well in relatively fertile, low-lying sites with deep sandy soil and uninterrupted access to water.

Growth requirements:

- Elevations range 300-2000 m.
- Temperatures range 20-30°C, but it is able to tolerate high temperatures of 40°.
- Annual rainfall range 100-1000 mm.



Reproduction and Communication

Balanites aegyptiaca reproduce mainly by seeds. Flowers are bisexual. The plant begins to flower and fruit at 5 to 7 years. Flowers are visited and pollinated by insects, especially Halictidae. Trees begin to fruit in 5-7 years and reach maturity in 25 years. Average mature trees yield 100-150 kg of ripe fruits each year.



Life span

Minimum lifespan of this species is 100 years.



Size

Balanites aegyptiaca can reach 6-17 metres high.



Parts



Branches have long, straight green spines arranged in spirals.

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Roots are complex system of strong, diagonally radiating roots forming a hemispherical mass with shallow, wide-spreading lateral roots.



Leaves are generally obovate or elliptic, grey- dark green, compound, alternate with one pair of leathery leaflets. Petiole is 5-20 mm long.



Flowers are greenish-yellow, inconspicuous, most commonly in a sessile or shortly pedunculate fascicle of a few flowers



Fruits are fleshy, ellipsoidal drupes, green, ripening to a yellowish colour and finally pale brown. When mature, a thin, leathery smooth exocarp loosely encloses a thick yellow-brown mesocarp.



Seeds are oval, woody, 15 mm long, rugulose, yellow.

INTRODUCTION

Tree

Balanites aegyptiaca, desert date, is an evergreen, multi-branched narrow formed tree common in the Sahel-Savannah region across Africa. It has a long history for use as a resource and has diverse traditional and cultural roles in many societies, especially African desert peoples. It provides food, medicinal products and fuel-wood valued for subsistence living in arid and semiarid areas. *Balanites aegyptiaca* is characterized by rounded and dense crown, grey and deeply fissured trunk, and green or greyish branches which are always armed with stout simple green or yellowish spines.

In Sudan, this tree is widespread along watercourses and in woodlands in arid and semi-arid regions. The fruits of this tree are commonly consumed and were utilized as famine food in western Sudan during the drought.

LIVELIHOODS / CULTURE

Cultivation

This plant is naturally growing but is also propagated by seeds near agricultural schemes or farms. The seeds are planted in the soil near the farms and do not need irrigation as they get their needs from the saturated soil. These trees are usually used to protect the crop as a windbreak.

Cultural Value

- Many parts of the plant are used as famine food in western Sudan.
- Fruits and seeds are used in traditional food recipes.
- The rosary which is called **Alfya** or **Lalooba** is made of a thousand beads from Heglig seeds.

Medicinal and health uses

- Fruit maceration is known for treating stomach pain and hemorrhoids by the Flata tribe in the Blue Nile state.
- Bark smoke fumigation is known for treating rheumatic pain in the Melit area (North Darfur).
- Fruit maceration is known for treating jaundice, diarrhea, dysentery, and stomach ache in the Melit area (North Darfur).

Cultural Expressions

Villages named after it:

Higlieeg means many trees are spread out.

Higliega means is a single tree, but it is very old.

Madha:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5amsZAB2cY>

THREATS

- Climate change.
- Natural enemies such as locusts and beetles.

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