

Prosopis juliflora

Recognize the problem

Family: Leguminosae (sub-family Mimosoideae) (bean family).

Common names: Prosopis, mesquite.

Kiswahili: Mathenge. **Afar:** Dergihara. **Amharic:** Woyane zaf.

Perennial, broadleaved, woody shrub (3-5 m tall) or tree (up to 15 m tall); bark thick, rough and grey-green becoming scaly with age; often multi-stemmed, especially following cutbacks (coppicing), with abundant large and very sharp thorns measuring up to 5 cm; deeply rooted.

Leaves: Doubly-divided composed leaves (6-8 cm long), 12-25 pairs of oblong leaflets per leaf, each 6-16 mm long and 1.5-3.2 mm wide.

Flowers: Fragrant golden-yellow, in dense spikes about 5-10 cm long.

Fruits: Cylindrical or slightly irregularly curved green pods which turn yellow upon ripening (10-20 cm long); containing 10-20 hard oval or elliptical seeds (2.5-7 mm long).

Seeds: Brown, oval in shape.

Background

Origin: Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and tropical South America.

Introduction: As a fuel and fodder species.

Habitat: Tropical regions; adapted to a very wide range of soil types and habitats; generally found in areas where plant growth is predominantly limited by water and soil fertility as the weed is able to thrive on very poor land; frost sensitive.

Spread: Seeds often spread via the digestive tract of animals such as goats, cattle, camels and some wild herbivores; also spread by water during heavy rains.

Invades: Establishes readily in cleared land and overgrazed areas; replaces native vegetation through competition for space and water and takes over rangelands.

Impacts: Negative effects include complete loss of pasture and rangelands for both domestic and wild ruminants (such as cattle, goats, camels, giraffes), losses due to restricted access to water, and illness and death of livestock due to eating the pods and being injured by the sharp and stout thorns. Other impacts are loss of cropland and increased management cost of invaded areas. Humans also sustain injury due to the thorns and can suffer from the subsequent inflammations. Dense stands can obstruct roads and block smaller trails reducing land available as pasture or croplands, water sources and fishing areas, and may block irrigation channels.

Scientific name(s) > *Prosopis juliflora*

Coppicing Prosopis and dense infestation. (Photo by René Eschen/CABI)



Prosopis inflorescence. (Photo by Colin Hughes, University of Oxford, in ISC)



The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: All Countries



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