

RAJASTHAN

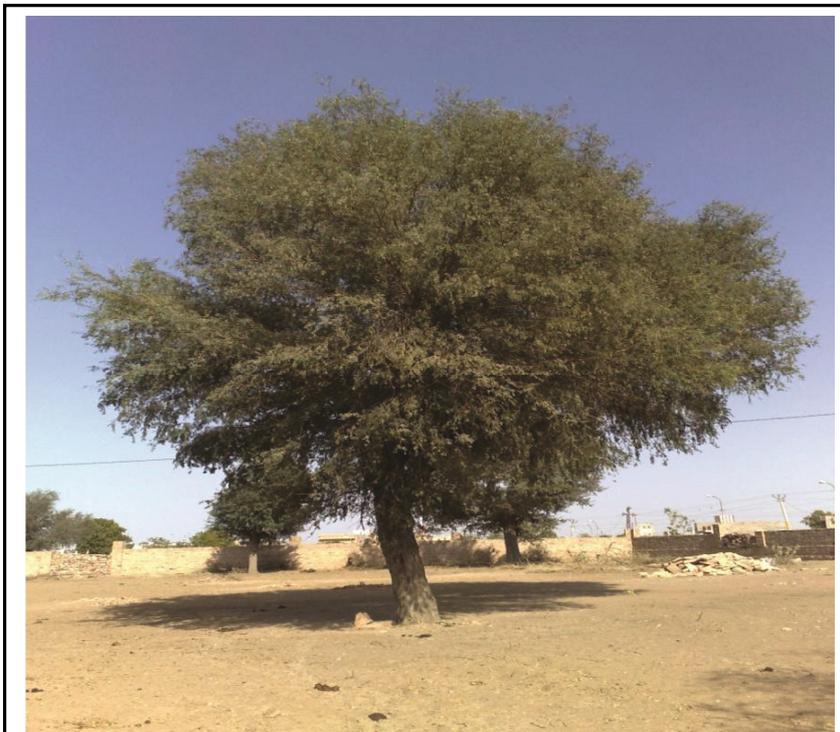
State Tree: Khejri, Sangri (Hindi).

Botanical Names: *Prosopis cineraria* (L.) Druce

Vernacular Names: Chhonkar, Khejada, Khejadi, Khijado (Hindi); Sami, Shami (Gujarati).

Family: Leguminosae – Mimosoideae

Etymology: The generic name, **Prosopis** means "burdock" in Latin and originated in the Greek language, and **cineraria** attributes to the ash or grey colour of prickles.



***Prosopis cineraria* (L.) Druce**

Description: Trees, 5 – 10 m high; bark rough with deep fissures or cracks, greyish brown; branchlets slender, glabrous and with curved, compressed prickles. Leaves 2-pinnate, 3 – 3.5 cm long; pinnae usually 2 pairs; leaflets subsessile, oblong,

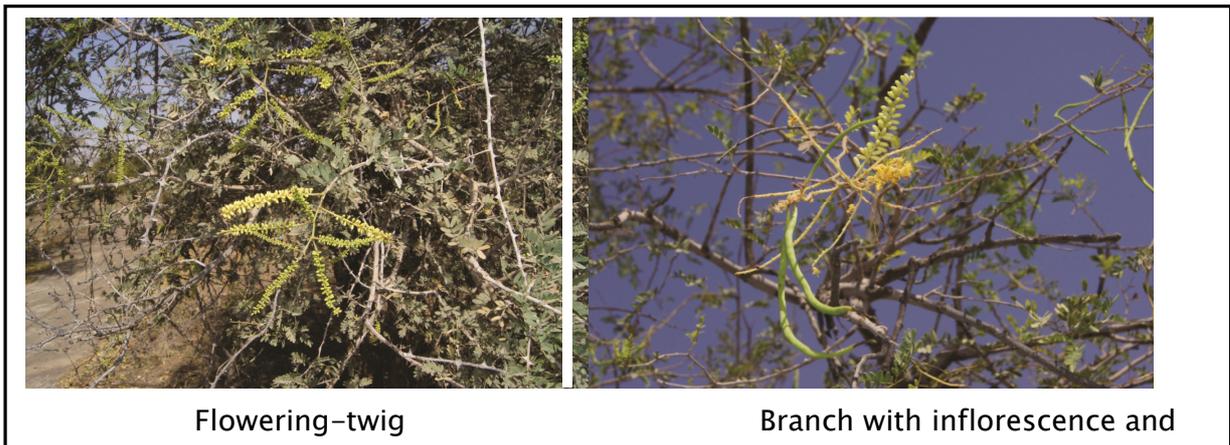
oblique at base, mucronate at apex, 0.5 – 1.2 × 0.3 – 0.5 cm; stipules foliaceous, deciduous. Flowers in axillary, simple or branched spikes of 6 – 10 cm long, yellow. Pods strap-shaped, pointed, 8 – 20 × 0.5 – 0.8 cm, turgid, pulpy, pendulous, yellow; seeds 10 – 15, oblong-suborbicular, subcompressed, wrinkled, dull brown.

Flowering & Fruiting: March – June.

Range of Distribution: In dry and arid regions of North-western India (Gujarat, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh), and also in drier parts of Central and Southern India, extending to Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Arabia.

Economic Importance: Generally, native people do not allow cutting of this tree. They use it only after its natural death. Timber is used for agricultural implements. Shoots and leaves are very good fodder. Tender green pods are cooked and eaten as vegetable. Dried pods are sold in market as 'Sangri'.

Traditional Uses: It has been used for centuries for human diet in the desert of Rajasthan, besides its use as fuel and fodder. Dry pods, also known as 'Marwari Mewa',



reduce the craving of water in summer and are eaten by farmers in lean periods. Leaves are a nutrition and highly palatable source of fodder for major desert livestock, such as camel and cattle. Pods increase milk production in milch animals. Twigs and branches used as fuel for cooking food and are also used as fencing material to protect farmlands.

Medicinal Uses: The flowers mixed with sugar are eaten by pregnant 'Bhil' and 'Garasia' ladies in the desert as a safeguard against abortion. Local Vaidyas (medicine men) prescribe the bark in rheumatism. The Bhil rub the ash of the bark over the body

for removing unwanted hair. Stem-bark has anti-inflammatory and anthelmintic properties, and is also used against leprosy, dysentery, bronchitis, asthma, leucoderma, piles and rheumatism.

Ceremonial Uses: Native people worship the tree during marriage and use the wood for making stump (Thamla) of Mandapam.

Note: Being a leguminous tree, it enriches the soil. Generally, native people do not allow felling of this tree and they do not use it as fuel wood as it is considered sacred. It is propagated from seeds. A root-borer, **Acanthophorus serraticornis** attacks its root system and then probably a root-rot fungus, **Ganoderma lucidum** that attacks it further and then subsequently termites attack it very easily, resulting in partial or total decaying of tree. Formation of insect galls on branches and inflorescence is very common feature, obstructing setting of fruits and resulting in declination of its population, in general and particularly in Rajasthan.

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