

Albizia odoratissima (L.f.) Benth.

M. K. HOSSAIN and T. K. NATH
Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences
Chittagong University, Bangladesh

FABACEAE (BEAN FAMILY)

Mimosa odoratissima Roxb.

Bansa, bilkumbi, bilwara, cham koroi, chichola, chichunda, chichwa, chinduga, jatikoroi, kala siris, kalia siris, karmaru, karu vagai siris, tentua koroi, tetua koroi, thitmagyi, thitpyu (Alam and others 1985, Brandis 1906, Gamble 1922, Hasan 1963, Kamaluddin 1984, Sana 1989, Troup 1921)

The genus contains 14 Indian species. *Albizia odoratissima* is widely distributed as a common constituent of many types of mixed deciduous forests, where it grows sporadically. It is frequently found on hill slopes of sub-Himalayan tracts from the Indus eastward; Bangladesh; Myanmar; central, western, and southern India; and the low-lying country of Ceylon. In northern India, *A. odoratissima* is common in the outer Himalaya and in the Siwalik hills. It extends throughout the greater part of the Indian Peninsula in dry and moist deciduous forests. In Ajmer-Merwara, India it is one of the most important species, growing in dry forests on hill slopes with *Anogeissus pendula* Edgew., *Acacia catechu* (L.f.) Brandis, *Boswellia serrata* Roxb., and other trees. In Myanmar, *A. odoratissima* is common in the upper mixed forests with teak (*Tectona grandis* L.f.) and its associates, extending into the dryer types. In Bangladesh, the tree is common in the mixed deciduous forests of Chittagong and Sylhet and is also planted in villages.

Albizia odoratissima is a large, woody, fast-growing, deciduous, multipurpose tree reaching 15 to 25 m in height. The tree grows about 87 cm in height annually. *Albizia odoratissima* grows in a wide variety of soils, but prefers moist, well-drained, loamy soils. Found from sea level to about 1667 m, *A. odoratissima* grows best in areas with 635 to 3048 mm of annual rainfall.

Basically a hardwood species, *A. odoratissima* has a dark brown heartwood and a specific gravity of 0.73 (Gamble 1922). The wood seasons, works, and polishes well and is fairly durable. The heartwood is used in buildings, wheels, furniture, agricultural implements, and house posts. In Bangladesh, about 75 percent of the total area planted in tea is shaded by this species (Sana 1989). Its leaves and twigs are good cattle feed (Brandis 1874, Laurie 1945, Mukherjee 1884). The bark of *A. odoratis-*

sima and *Flacourtia ramontchi* L'Hér. is applied daily to the bodies of persons with intermittent fevers (Causis 1986).

The pale yellowish white, fragrant, sessile flower heads appear in large terminal panicles from April through June. Pods ripen February through April in the following year. Ripened pods are 13 to 30 cm long by 2.54 to 3.3 cm wide and are reddish brown or purplish green with darker markings over the seeds. The pods contain 8 to 12 reddish brown, obovate seeds.

Mature pods are collected from selected mother trees by lopping branch tops. The pods are dried in the sun until they open, and the seeds are extracted by hand. Seeds are dried in thin layers under cover. *Albizia odoratissima* seeds average about 22,000 per kg (Chowdhury 1975, Matin and Rashid 1992). Seeds stored in gunny-bags or air-tight containers will remain viable for 1 year.

Seeds should be soaked in cold water during the night before sowing as a germination pretreatment (Hossain 1993). Seeds sowed in seed trays, polybags, and seed beds filled with soil and cow dung (3:1) showed 69 percent, 69 percent, and 47 percent germination, respectively, within 2 to 10 days without pretreatment (Matin and Rashid 1992).

Albizia odoratissima is easily propagated by seeds and coppices (Alam and others 1985). Containerized stock may be grown in either partial shade or full sun. Thirty days after transplanting, seedlings in partial shade showed 100 percent survival; those in full sun showed about 94.5 percent survival (Matin and Rashid 1992). The roots are primarily superficial, and numerous root suckers are produced. Young plants are susceptible to frost, causing plantations in Ajmer-Merwara, India to fail (Troup 1921).

