

**Ziziphus jujuba**, Mill.

Common name: Jujube  
Pinyin: da zao  
Part used: Fruit  
Family: Rhamnaceae



### Plant Description

Many cultivars of the Jujube tree have been commercially introduced, with ‘Li’ and ‘Lang’ being two of the most popular. Deciduous thorny trees grow to about 25’; leaves are bright green with parallel veining. Small sweet-smelling yellow flowers bloom in leaf axils in summer. They generally tolerate temperatures from -15 to +115 degrees Fahrenheit, USDA hardiness zone low of 6 or 7.

### Propagation

Tree starts are available in the nursery trade. Seeds or grafts are also commonly used. Roger Meyer, a prominent jujube expert, wrote that one could stratify the seed and wait for up to two years for germination, or one could take a seed and cut it along the natural suture, pre-sprout, and then sow for immediate germination.<sup>1</sup> From Sunstar Herbs in New Mexico the Thorps reported 75% + germination rate with cold stratification methods. (Thorp, email to Charles Martin February 13, 2009)

### Field Production

Jujube grows productively on a variety of soils. They are tolerant of wet and hot semi-arid conditions. They break dormancy and set fruit late, potentially missing late frosts; however according to the Thorps they need “150 frost free days for mature fruits”. Plant several year old nursery-grown trees on 15’ centers. Jujube trees can sprout from root suckers, and the Thorps mentioned the variety ‘Li’ can be especially weedy in this regard. With severe drought they will abort fruit, and in areas with short seasons or low heat, fruit will not develop or mature.

### Pest

None significant.

### Harvest

For best quality fruit the trees are “carefully” picked with an on-going harvest. Carefully, because the thorns can break off under the skin. The folks at Sunstar Herbs have stated that environmental factors strongly affect fruiting habits and trialing is recommended for determining sweetness and ripeness in relation to harvest time. (Thorp, email to Charles Martin February 13, 2009)

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<sup>1</sup> Jujube: Meyer R., Chambers R 1998 *Jujube Primer and Source Book*. Fruit Gardener Books, California Rare Fruit Growers, Inc.

Kathleen Norris Brenzel, ed., *Sunset Western Garden Book* (Menlo Park, CA: Sunset Publishing) 2007 .