

ALBIZIA LEBBECK (L.) BENTHAM

Fabaceae (Leguminosae)/Pea Family

Common Names: Woman's tongue, Tibet lebeck, singer-tree, shack-shack

Synonymy: *Mimosa lebeck* L., *M. speciosa* (Jacq.) Willd.

Origin: Tropical Asia, northern Australia

Botanical Description: Deciduous, unarmed tree to 20 m (65 ft) tall, with a rounded, spreading crown and pale bark. Leaves alternate, twice compound, with 2-5 pairs of pinnae, each pinna with 3-10 pairs of leaflets (even-pinnate); leaflets elliptic-oblong, 2-4 cm (1-2 in) long, usually asymmetrical at base, dull green above, paler green below; petiole with a sessile, elliptic gland near the base above. Flowers mimosa-like, in showy, rounded clusters near stem tips, 5-6 cm (2-2.5 in) across, cream or yellowish-white, each flower with numerous long stamens. Fruit a flat, linear pod, to 30 cm (1 ft) long, with many seeds; dried pods persistent after leaf-fall, often heard rattling in the wind.

NOTE: In Florida, distinguished from other unarmed leguminous trees with twice-compound leaves by its number of leaflets (usually 20+) and the leaflets' larger size (usually > 2 cm long).

Ecological Significance: Introduced to Florida for ornament in 1880s (Gordon and Thomas 1997). By 1933 (Small 1933), recognized as invading tropical hammocks in the Florida Keys. Known by 1990 (Isely 1990) as a fast-growing colonizer of disturbed areas, becoming common in central and south Florida through the Keys (Nelson 1994). Seedlings now occurring in great numbers throughout Big Cypress National Preserve (T. Pernas, National Park Service, 1996 personal communication). Invading somewhat disturbed pinelands of Everglades National Park (D. Jones, National Park Service, 1996 personal communication). Invading pine rocklands and canopy gaps in rockland hammocks in Dade County (R. Hammer, Miami-Dade Parks Department, 1996 personal communication). Also naturalized on moist and dry coastal hillsides in Puerto Rico, in pastures in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and elsewhere in the Caribbean and Central and South America (Little and Wadsworth 1964, Watkins 1970).

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Flower heads

Distribution: Presently pantropical in occurrence, widely planted and naturalized (Little and Wadsworth 1964). In Florida, now reported from more than 20 natural areas in Monroe, Dade, Collier, Palm Beach, Martin, and Lee counties (EPPC 1996). Naturalized populations documented by herbarium specimens from Broward, Collier, Dade, Indian River, Lee, Marion, Polk, and St. Lucie counties (Wunderlin *et al.* 1996).

Life History: Fast-growing from seed (Morton 1971a). Will not tolerate freezing temperatures, but naturally grows in the Himalayas to altitudes of 1,600 m (5,200 ft) above MSL (Lowry *et al.* 1994). Grows well with average annual rainfalls of 400-2,500 mm (16-98 in), and in soils that are saline or alkaline, but not waterlogged soils (Lowry *et al.* 1994). A nitrogen-fixing, mycorrhizal-associating legume (Osonubi *et al.* 1991). Tolerates coastal salt spray, with some protection (Menninger 1964, Little and Wadsworth 1964). Flowers from April to September, but primarily in spring (or onset of rainy season), with pods held nearly throughout the year (Little and Wadsworth 1964, Wunderlin 1982, Barneby and Grimes 1996). Produces massive quantities of seeds, with seedlings appearing in great numbers (Watkins 1970). Crows and squirrels observed feeding on seeds in India (Natarajan *et al.* 1994).

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In Everglades National Park

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Pods, compound leaf