

Chinaberry *Melia azederach*



Small to medium-sized, round-headed tree to 12 m tall. Leaves alternate, deciduous, bipinnately compound, 0.3 to 0.9 m long; leaflets 2.5 to 5 cm long with deeply toothed margins. Flowers pinkish to lavender, 1 to 1.5 cm long, borne in large, terminal panicles. Fruit barely fleshy, one-seeded, greenish yellow to yellow-tan, 1 to 1.5 cm in diameter, persisting on the tree throughout much of the winter. Found throughout the South, but rare in the more northern areas and at higher alti-

tudes. Once widely cultivated as a fast-growing shade tree around small homes, but escaping widely; along roadsides and fence rows, in waste places, and around buildings.

Toxicity

The toxic principles are tetranortriterpene neurotoxins and unidentified resins. The fruit (berries) are the most toxic part of the tree. The leaves, bark, and flowers are only mildly toxic and usually cause no problem. Most poisonings occur in the fall or winter when the berries ripen.

Swine and sheep are most often affected. Toxicity may occur after consumption of more than 0.5 percent of body weight. Poultry and cattle can be poisoned, but larger amounts are required. Children have been poisoned by eating the berries.

Symptoms

The gastrointestinal tract is affected; therefore, common symptoms include vomiting and diarrhea. Occasionally, the central nervous system is affected, and animals are severely depressed or excited.

Treatment

Evacuate the affected animal's gastrointestinal system. Use lentin-carbocal gastrointestinal protectives, respiratory stimulants, and caffeine.