

Vascular Plants of Williamson County

Melia azedarach – CHINABERRY, PRIDE-OF-INDIA [Meliaceae]

Melia azedarach L., CHINABERRY, PRIDE-OF-INDIA. Tree, deciduous, (1–)several-trunked, highly branched with rounded canopy, in range to 12 m tall; shoots with only cauline leaves < 250–550 × 250–450 mm, length > width, the widest at midblade; trunk bark on trunk purplish red and reddish with numerous, conspicuous, horizontal, gray lenticels. **Stems:** initially with several low ridges soon cylindric, on twigs covered with young bark and knobby with enlarged leaf bases having prominent leaf scars; pith solid. **Leaves:** helically alternate, 2–3-odd-pinnately compound and bilaterally symmetric with 4–8 pairs of opposite to subopposite lateral primary leaflets widely spreading along rachis, approaching top primary leaflets 1-foliolate, other primary leaflets with 3, 5, or 7 secondary leaflets, lateral with (2–)3-foliolate basal tertiary leaflets, petiolate, without stipules; petiole widely flared and channeled at base and cylindric above, 60–105 mm long, tough, lower side with a pair of deep pits producing liquid (extrafloral nectaries) forming 3 prominent ridges (decurent on stem) but obscure on mature petiole; rachis with 1–3 ridges decurent from each primary leaflet; lateral primary leaflets widely spreading along rachis, compound leaflets to 230 mm long, having to 6 pairs of lateral secondary leaflets to 28 mm spaced along axis, puberulent, the 1–3 pairs of subterminal primary leaflets simple; petiolule enlarged at base and with several ridges, 2–30 mm long, strongly 3-ridged on upper side, puberulent; ultimate blades of leaflets ovate to elliptic, 25–74 × 11–32 mm, asymmetric (lateral leaflets) and symmetric (terminal leaflet), tapered at base and mostly oblique narrower on trailing side, crenate-serrate with teeth absent on lower portion, acuminate at tip, pinnately veined with midrib somewhat raised on upper surface and raised on lower surface with principal veins slightly raised, dark green and initially glossy and puberulent on upper surface aging glabrate and with special subsessile glandular hairs especially along midrib, lower surface on forming blade densely covered with minute tufts of tannish stellate hairs soon disappearing. **Inflorescence:** panicle of lateral cymes, axillary to leaves on new spring shoot, 60–300 × 60–180 mm, open, 1–8 panicles per shoot from successive nodes, panicle 5–50(–80)-flowered, flowers mostly (1–)2–3 per cyme (lateral branchlet), branchlets to 15, widely spreading, including flower to 65 mm long, branchlet 0–2 in opposite pairs (the lowest branchlets) and alternate but unevenly spaced along rachis, superficially appearing glabrous; peduncle cylindric, 30–130 × < 2 mm, green, glabrate with sparse puberulent hairs; bract subtending branchlet narrowly triangular to lanceolate, 3–4.4 mm long, greenish, puberulent, decreasing upward, early-deciduous; primary branchlet axes slender, mostly to 25 mm long, lacking pulvinus at base, at top of primary axis commonly 2-forked (somewhat 3-forked or with terminal flower); bractlet subtending pedicel lanceolate, ca. 2 × 0.5 mm, greenish, puberulent, early-deciduous in bud; pedicel 2.5–7 mm long, with constriction (abscission zone) at or below midpoint, below constriction with several low projections (bracteoles), bracteoles sparsely puberulent and sometimes with glandular, rose head on slender teeth along margins, having puberulent hairs, upper pedicel green or with purplish lines. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, 17–22 mm across (corolla); sweetly fragrant; **calyx** deeply 5-lobed, fused only at base; lobes (sepals) appressed to flower, ovate, 1.8–2.5 × 1–1.2 mm (1 lobe slightly smaller), green with purple tip and margins (later margins sometimes outrolled from green axis), outer (lower) surface

puberulent and with deciduous, minute food bodies on margins, inner surface glabrous; **petals** 5, widely spreading, oblanceolate (elliptic), 7.7–11 × 2.5–3.5 mm, white nearly to midpoint above pale pink-purple to light pink-purple at tip (lower surface) lighter on upper surface, after pollination fading almost to white, somewhat cupped upward and lower surface ridged and puberulent, minutely papillate-hairy on margins above midpoint; **stamens** 10, fused into erect column (monadelphous); filament column 8.5–9 mm long, green at base then some white but mostly purple to deep purple at top, wall fleshy, inner surface pale purple, 10-ridged, and short-pilose, outer surface with several appressed purple hairs above midpoint, at top to 20-lobed, the lobes initially erect but spreading at pollination (exposing anthers), mostly fingerlike and ca. 1.5 mm long, concealing anthers on inner side, free portion of filament short, slender, and white, on inner side of anther; anthers dorsifixed near base, dithecal, 1.2–1.6 mm long, pale light yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen light yellow; **nectary disc** beneath ovary within filament column, shallowly 10-lobed and wavy, 0.25 mm long, green; **pistil** 1, included within filament column below level of anthers, ca. 6.5 mm long; ovary superior, slightly wider than but indistinct from style, green, 5–6-chambered, each chamber narrow with several stacked ovules attached to center; style cylindric, 1 mm diameter, light green at top with a narrow purplish ring; stigmatic lobes 5–6, inward-leaning, triangular, 0.5 mm long, pale green, with a small opening at center. **Fruit:** drupe, on nodding panicle persistent during winter, 1-stoned, usually several-seeded, when dry crinkled and shriveled with dimples, 7–12 × 7.3–12.5 mm, dark cream-colored, with dry pulp; stone (endocarp) conspicuously 5–6-ridged, 6–10 × 5–9 mm, whitish, exceedingly hard, any chamber with only 1 seed. **Seed:** ovoid somewhat compressed, ca. 7 × 3 × 2 mm, satiny black, with winglike edge above midpoint, faces minutely textured (not smooth).

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