

***Tamarix gallica* L.**  
Tamaricaceae



Compiled by Dr. Salima Benhouhou

■ **Morphological description**

A tall perennial shrub/small tree, densely ramified, 2-10 m. high. The purple-brown bark is initially smooth with numerous elongated lenticels, later developing shallow splits and becoming rough when mature. The tiny, scale-like, 1-3 mm.-long leaves are green or grey-green. The small flowers have 5 lavender pink or white petals 1.5-2 mm. long, numerous on long, very slender, spike-like racemes in terminal panicles. The fruits are small dry capsules containing small cottony seeds. The capsules are conical, trigonous, tapering and pale pink.

Flowering starts around March and lasts until May. In the central Sahara it has been observed in full bloom in June.

■ **Geographical distribution**

**Local:** Common in Algeria.

**Regional:** North Africa.

**Global:** Mediterranean and throughout the Sahara, reaching the tropical regions.

■ **Ecology**

*Tamarix gallica* is abundant along streams and wadis, on the banks of the rivers in moist sandy soil, with a high salt content. It has long taproots that can penetrate to the deep water tables. The French tamarisk thrives within a wide range of rainfall (around 600 mm./year in the Mediterranean regions to 100 mm./year in the Sahara).

***Tamarix gallica* L.**

*T. anglica* Webb

*Tamarix algeriensis* Hort.

*Tamarix brachylepis* Sennen

*Tamarix madritensis* Pau & Villar

*Tamarix*: according to Bonnier, this refers to a small stream in the Pyrenees; *gallica*: from France

**Arabic:** fersig

**Berber:** tazuat

**English:** French tamarisk, saltcedar

**French:** tamaris de France

■ **Status**

According to the IUCN criteria this Mediterranean and Saharo-sindian species falls into the "C" category.

The French tamarisk, a common garden plant, spreads vegetatively by adventitious roots or submerged stems and by seeds.

■ **Part used**

The leaves and bark are collected in the spring and prepared as an infusion, a decoction and a powder. This can be taken by mouth, or used as an external compress.

■ **Constituents**

Its principal constituent is an alkaloid, tamarixin, along with traces of its aglocone, tamarixetin. The plant also contains a high level of tannin (ellagic and gallic) and quercetol (methyllic ester).

■ **Pharmacological action and toxicity**

Astringent, tonic, diuretic, hepatic stimulant and stomachic action.

The plant is not reported to be toxic.

■ **Pharmacopeias**

Not relevant for this species.

■ **Pharmaceutical products**

Product Range Bonnisan, Geriforte (GeriCare / StressCare), Liv.52 (LiverCare), Liv.52 drops, Dignyton, Geriforte Aqua, Geriforte Vet, Liv.52 Vet. (Internet source 2 and 3).

## ■ Traditional medicine and local knowledge

It is used as an anthelmintic, antihemorrhoid and haemostat and for diarrhoea and gingivitis.

The plant is used to cure dromedary galls. It is used for dyeing and as fuel. It is very tolerant of maritime exposure and is a good shelter hedge in coastal gardens. It is excellent for soil stabilisation thanks to its extensive root system and is suitable for use in erosion control in sandy soils.

In Tissint (Morocco), powdered *Tamarix gallica* is given as a vermifuge and antidiarrhoeic. An infusion of the leaves is taken for colds. It is considered as an abortifacient.

In the Dra (Morocco), the nomads lie on a bed of fresh leaves to ease rheumatic pain.

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## ■ References

### Relevant to the plant and its uses

Mukerjee, A.B. & Dasgupta, M., 1971. Cirrhosis of Liver Results of Treatment with an Indigenous Drug: Liv.52. Journal of the Indian Medical Profession. 17, 7853, 7p.

Internet source 1 :

[http://www.scs.leeds.ac.uk/cgibin/pfaf/arr\\_html?Tamarix+gallica](http://www.scs.leeds.ac.uk/cgibin/pfaf/arr_html?Tamarix+gallica).

Internet source 2 :

[http://www.himalayahealthcare.com/herbfinder/h\\_tamar.htm](http://www.himalayahealthcare.com/herbfinder/h_tamar.htm)

Internet source 3 : <http://www.naturalhealthconsult.com/Monographs/liv52.html>

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