

***Erica arborea* L.**  
Ericaceae



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■ **Morphological description**

*Erica arborea* is a densely branched perennial, a small tree or shrub 40-120 cm. high but possibly 4 m. tall. The branches are slender, downy and covered with long whitish hairs. The small leaves are in whorls of three, very narrow, no more than 5 mm. long, dark green, shiny, hairless and grooved on the underside. The flowers are greenish or greenish-yellow, rarely slightly tinged with red, arranged in 1-4s in the axil of the leaves, and form a long, very narrow bunch on each branch. The peduncle is longer than the bell-shaped corolla. The calyx is hairless and half the size of the corolla. The anthers are enclosed, with two horns at the base, and the style is not very prominent. The fruit is a glabrous capsule and the seeds are tiny. Flowering occurs from February until June.

■ **Geographical distribution**

**Local:** Kroumirie, the Medjerda valley, Cap Bon and the Tunisian dorsal ridge.

***Erica arborea* L. Sp.**

Pl.: 353. 1753

**Arabic:** bou haddad

**French:** bruyère arborescente, bruyère à balais

**English:** tree heather, tree-heath

**Regional:** Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

**Global:** The Mediterranean: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Yugoslavia, Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, France, the Balearics, Spain and Portugal.

■ **Ecology**

*Erica arborea* is a species that grows especially in cork oak and zen oak forests and maquis. It prefers siliceous soils and will not grow above 650 m. altitude.

■ **Status, conservation and culture**

It is considered to be one of the forest by-products that is used by the local rural people. The branches are used in the traditional way to make household implements (spoons, bowls, plates, etc.) or brooms. The use of *Erica arborea* to make and sell these traditional products is subject to acquiring a permit and is taxed.

■ **Part used**

The flowering tips.

■ **Constituents**

The flowers contain tannins (proanthocyanidols) and a number of flavonoids. The leaves contain  $\alpha$ -D-glucoside.

■ **Traditional medicine**

A decoction of the flowering tips of *Erica arborea* is suggested for renal lithiasis; three cups a day should be taken before meals. The flowers are used in a decoction as a diuretic and a urinary antiseptic.

■ **Pharmacological action and toxicity**

The tannins are astringent and antiseptic for the urinary passages.

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