

# *Zanthoxylum piperitum*

## Japanese pepper, Japanese prickly-ash



*Zanthoxylum piperitum* (Sichuan pepper) is the most common species within this unfamiliar genus in the *Rutaceae* (rue or citrus family). The Sichuan pepper comes from Japan, Korea and northern China. The Sichuan pepper grows narrow and upright in its juvenile form, ultimately reaching a height of around seven metres and - thanks to the flat branching habit - a similar width. This small tree or medium-sized to large shrub naturally develops into a multi-stem form and eventually acquires a whimsical, round crown and yet displays a compact, neat form compared with other species of *Zanthoxylum*.

The dark brown branches and twigs of the Sichuan pepper are covered with pairs of razor-sharp, flat, red-brown thorns. On older stems, these flatten down to irregular thorn stubs. It produces flattened corymbs of yellow-green flowers and although unremarkable, they are prized by insects. The reddish, round and flesh-like capsules contain aromatic seeds. The unevenly pinnate, dark green leaf is made up of 11 to 19 leaflets. The midrib is hairy with fine spikes. In the autumn the tree turns a magnificent bright yellow, making a nice contrast with the red berries. The leaves in particular have a lemony scent and are used in cooking.

*Zanthoxylum piperitum* is very hardy and easy to grow. What's more, it is not particular about the soil and not prone to diseases. The Sichuan pepper provides ornamental value in every season and the fact it is edible makes it a special plant to use. Plus, the tree's quirky form and many thorns provide ideal cover for birds. This botanical rarity is a wonderful addition for the garden but can even be planted in parks and on a sheltered roof garden or in containers.

### TYPES OF PLANTING

**Tree types:** multi-stemmed trees, characteristic trees, solitary shrubs

### USE

**Location:** park, in containers, roof garden, large garden, small garden | **Pavement:** none | **Planting concepts:** food forest

### CHARACTERISTICS

**Crown shape:** flattened spherical, vase-shaped | **Crown structure:** semi-open | **Height:** 5 - 7 m | **Width:** 5 - 7 m | **Winter hardiness zone:** 6A - 8B

### ASPECTS

**Wind:** intolerant to wind | **Soil:** loess, sabulous clay, light clay, sand, loamy soil | **Nutrient level:** low in nutrients, moderately rich in nutrients, rich in nutrients | **Soil moisture level:** dry, moist | **Light requirements:** sun, partial shade | **pH range:** acidic, neutral, alkaline | **Host plant/forage plant:** bees, birds, nectar value 5, pollen value 5 | **Extreme environments:** tolerates heat

### PLANTKENMERKEN

**Flowers:** panicle, corymbose, infundibular, discrete, small | **Flower colour:** yellow-green | **Flowering period:** June - July | **Leaf colour:** dark green | **Leaves:** deciduous, polished, a bit prickly, rough, underside hairy, scented with contusion, pinnate | **Autumn colour:** pale yellow | **Fruits:** striking, rich fruit yield, edible, small, aromatic, capsule | **Fruit colour:** red | **Bark colour:** grey-brown | **Bark:** smooth, thorned | **Twig colour:** dark brown | **Twigs:** thorned, with lenticels, polished, horizontal branches, pendulous, long shoots | **Root system:** shallow, fine roots