

***Morus alba* L.**

Moraceae

Source of: sāng yè (zhī, bái pí, shèn) 桑叶 (枝, 白皮, 葇)
white mulberry leaf (twig, rootbark, fruit)



Summary Description

A full sun, deciduous, fast-growing small tree to 30 feet in height, *M. alba* is the analog to the native red mulberry and is on the invasive lists. The two analog species have interbred, compromising the genetics of the native tree. Estimated hardy to Zone 4. Two subspecies are differentiated by the color of the fruit: one is dark purple when ripe, the other is white to purple. The bark is gray-brown with shallow furrows. The leaves are shiny, slightly pubescent (hairy) and with irregular lobes. White mulberry trees were planted in New York in the mid-19th century when silk factories were established in Auburn. (Silkworms do not eat red mulberry leaves.) It is a common street tree, and a cultivar with a weeping form is a popular ornamental.

Propagation

Soak seed in water 24 hours, change water and repeat 4 times. Cold stratify 3 months. Surface sow, press seed into soil and keep moist.

Cultivation

M. alba yields four different medicinals: leaf, twig, rootbark and fruit. The trees are grown differently depending on what medicinal portion is harvested. This fact sheet deals only with the leaf. Allow the trees to grow for 3 years, then coppice them to promote the regrowth of shoots.

Harvest & Processing

Hand-strip whole leaves from shoots after the leaves reach full size. Dry in a single layer in temperatures not to exceed 110°F. Leaves harvested after the first mild frost (traditionally, midway between the autumn equinox and winter solstice) have a slight bronze tint and are valued as shuāng sāng yè 霜桑叶, frosted mulberry leaf.

References

Flora of China: http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=2&taxon_id=200006379
Bensky *Materia Medica* page: 54

Analog species

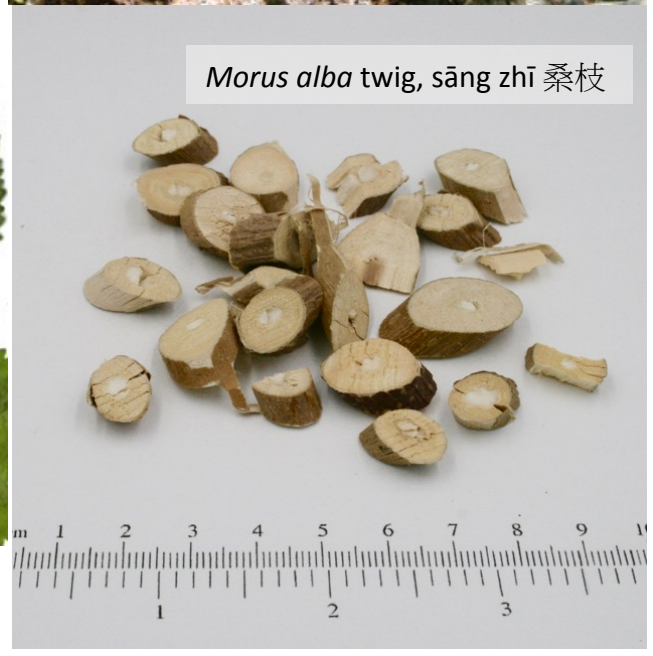
Morus rubra L.



Morus alba trunk, garden at American College of TCM, San Francisco



Irregularly lobed leaves
Photo: Iowa State University



Morus alba twig, sāng zhī 桑枝