

Nile tamarisk, *athel*, *tarfah*

*Tamarix nilotica* is known as Nile Tamarisk or Manna Tamarisk, in Arabic *athel*, *abal* or *tarfa*. The name Manna comes from the fact that insects would suck the sap of these Tamarisks, and then excrete the honeydew-like substance as part of their metabolism. These sweet Manna balls were used by the Bedouins as nourishment. They also had a medicinal use as an anti-inflammatory and antibacterial agent against throat and gum inflammation. A shrub or small tree, its area of distribution lies in the Arabian peninsula and northern Africa. The preferred locations reach from Mediterranean wood- or shrublands up to extreme deserts. The slow, irregularly growing tree reaches a height of 8 metres. It is often multi-stemmed, and the foliage is grey-green. The leaves are squamate. The purple flowers stay in panicles together. These panicles are usually 10 cm long. Flowering lasts very long. The fruits are capsules. Propagation is by direct seeding and by cuttings. *Tamarix nilotica* can withstand high salinity. It has no special requirements in relation to soil or irrigation. It is adapted to the desert, with its hot winds, droughts and heat. The Manna Tamarisk is useful in open country as a coloniser, bank stabiliser and for environmental consolidation because of its invasive roots. The small tree is attractive in groups or massed planting. Woodland edges, pond or stream edges, as in its natural habitats, will be the best recommendation for its use in landscape design, for example in Wadi Hanifah or the Al Hair Lake Area.



**GENERAL**

- Origin : sub-tropical
- Vigour : slow-growing
- Humidity : extremely arid, very arid, semi-arid
- Propagation : direct sowing, sowing and pricking out, cuttings
- Maintenance : low

**CONDITIONS**

- Dessication : resistant
- Stagnant water : resistant
- Irrigation : low
- Salinity/ppm : very high (16000 ppm)
- Hardiness : -9°C

**SHAPE**

- Type : tree, shrub
- Height : 3 m-8 m
- Spread : 2 m-6 m
- Foliage : evergreen

**FLOWER**

- Colour : purple
- Size : 10 cm
- Period : March - May

**FRUIT**

- Type of fruit : capsule
- Fruit size : 3 cm
- Toxicity : inedible, poisonous