

California Pepper Tree, *filfil rafieh*

GENERAL

Origin	: Mediterranean, sub-tropical, tropical
Vigour	: normal growth rate
Humidity	: very humid, extremely humid
Propagation	: sowing and pricking out, cuttings
Maintenance	: moderate

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: vulnerable
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: high
Salinity/ppm	: high (4500 ppm)
Hardiness	: -6°C

SHAPE

Type	: tree
Height	: 9 m-15 m
Spread	: 7 m-15 m
Foliage	: semi-evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: yellow
Size	: 5 cm - 15 cm
Period	: April - May
Smell	: aroma, moderate, leaf

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: drupe(fleshy/ juicy)
Fruit size	: 0.5 cm - 0.7 cm
Toxicity	: edible when processed

Schinus molle, known as the Californian Pepper Tree and *filfil-rafieh* in Arabic, has its area of distribution in the Peruvian Andean desert, Chile, central America and southeast Argentina. It is not related to the pepper plant (*Piper nigrum*), but the edible, red fruits are similar to peppercorns and the tree is so called, because of their shape and taste. The evergreen to semi-evergreen tree grows to a height of 12 metres. It has an open, umbrella-shaped crown with pendulous branches. The leaves are alternate and pinnate with a lanceolate shape. The white male and female flowers grow on different trees; the bloom is unimpressive, in contrast to the pinkish-red fruits, which hang in clusters of dozens of berries nearly the whole year round. Propagation can be done by seeds, cuttings and suckers. *S. molle* has an extensive, but flat root system which can be a problem for hard paving in the proximity. Tolerant of most soils, it requires full sun and is drought-tolerant, hardy. Foliage may be damaged by frost and also suffer from insects. The Pepper Tree comes from arid regions, but experience in Arriyadh has shown that it cannot withstand too harsh desert conditions. In King Fahd Road, for example, it disappeared after planting, because it needed more humidity and shelter, i.e. no hot, desiccating winds. However, it can be recommended in specific, sheltered situations in urban areas, in parks as a specimen tree and in pedestrian precincts. Attention should be paid to the possible problems of fruit drop litter and wind damage.

