

## LAWSONIA INERMIS



Kingdom: Plantae  
Clade: Angiosperms  
Order: Myrtales  
Family: Lythraceae  
Subfamily: Lythroideae  
Genus: Lawsonia  
Species: *L. inermis*

*Lawsonia inermis*, commonly known as henna, is a flowering shrub or small tree native to dry, coastal scrublands of North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of southern Asia. It has naturalized in some parts of Africa and northern Australia. The species is named after the Scottish physician Isaac Lawson, a good friend of Linnaeus.

*Lawsonia inermis* is native to dry, coastal scrublands of North Africa, the Middle East, and portions of southern Asia, and has naturalized in parts of Africa and northern Australia. Mature specimens can reach up to 20 feet tall with an equal spread. The leaves are elliptic to lanceolate in shape, reaching up to 2 inches long and 1 inch wide, and held on slender branches armed with thorns. Terminal panicles of highly fragrant white or pink flowers bloom seasonally.



## GENERAL CHARACTERS

**Habit:** Shrub or small tree, reaching 1.8 to 7.6 meters (6 to 25 ft) in height.

**Leaves:** Elliptic to lanceolate shaped, oppositely arranged on the stem. They are glabrous (smooth, without hairs) and measure approximately 1.5–5.0 cm long and 0.5–2 cm wide (0.6–2 in x 0.2–0.8 in). The tips are pointed (acuminate).

**Stems:** Young branches can be armed with thorns, but mature specimens tend to be thornless (hence the species name "inermis" meaning unarmed).

**Flowers:** Small, fragrant, white or red flowers with four petals. They bloom in large terminal panicles (clusters) seasonally.

**Fruit:** Small, brown, globose capsules about 4–8 mm (0.16–0.31 in) in diameter. They split irregularly into four sections when ripe and contain numerous seeds.

**Soil Preference:** Adapts to a variety of well-draining soils but thrives in rich, medium to dry conditions.

**Light Preference:** Full sun to partial shade. In hotter regions, plants prefer some afternoon shade.

**Climate:** Warm climates. *Lawsonia inermis* is frost-sensitive. USDA hardiness zones 10-12.

## USES OF LAWSONIA INERMIS

**Dye:** The leaves of *Lawsonia inermis* are primarily known for producing a reddish-orange dye known as henna. Henna has been used to dye skin, hair, and fingernails for centuries in various cultures around the world.

**Medicine:** In some traditional medicine practices, *Lawsonia inermis* leaves are used to treat a variety of ailments, including skin infections, wounds, and fever.

**Cosmetics:** Henna is also used in some cosmetic products, such as shampoos and conditioners.