



ELM

ELM, any of several species of hardy deciduous ornamental or forest trees of the genus *Ulmus* L. (fam. Ulmaceae), typically called *nārvan* in Persian.

Nomenclature, habitat, and local names. According to J. Zieliński (pp. 1-8), this genus is represented by the following species and hybrids in the area covered by K. H. Rechinger's *Flora Iranica* (q.v.; for the three or four species found in Persia, see also Parsa, pp. 1307-11, Sā'ī, pp. 210-12, Ṭābetī, pp. 753-57, and Ḳātamsāz, pp. 4-10; local names from Parsa, Sā'ī, Ṭābetī, Javānšīr, p. 160, etc.): 1. *U. wallichiana* Planch.; habitat: Afghanistan (Nūrestān), Pakistan (Swat, Kurram, Quetta). 2. *U. chumlia* Melville and Heybroek; habitat: West Pakistan (Baluchistan). 3. *U. pumila* L. (= *U. manshurica* Nakai, etc.); habitat: Turkmenistan. 4. *U. villosa* Brandis ex Gamble (= *U. laevigata* Royle); habitat: Pakistan (Swat, Baluchistan). 5. *U. minor* Mill. (= *U. campestris* L. [ambiguous name], *U. carpinifolia* G. Suckow, *U. suberosa* Moench, *U. araxina* Takht., etc.); habitat: Republic of Azarbaijan (Talish); Caspian forests and plains from Arasbārān and Āstārā to Gorgān, Zagros forests and steppes in western Persia, Khorasan (Bīrjand), Tehran province, Qazvīn, Qom, etc.; Turkmenistan (Kopet Dagħ); local names in Persia: *qara-(ā)ḡāj* (Turk., lit. black tree; Arasbārān, Āstārā, Karaj, Tehran, Hamadān), *samad/t* (Ṭavāleš, environs of Rašt), *gūl-e pardār* (Gīlakī-Persian, lit. feathered flower; an allusion to the winged samaras; environs of Rašt), *lē/ī* (Lāhijān, Rūdsar, Deylamān), *lo* (Rāmsar, Šahsavār), *ūjā* (Māzandarān, Gorgān), *gerzem* (Mašhad), *ūja/e* (environs of Ḳorramābād in Luristan), *vej(e)*, *vaja/e*, *vaj* (Harsīn in Luristan), *bo/ūz* (Kurdistan), *vezk*, *v/besk* (Isfahan, Baḳtīārī), *vezm* (Qazvīn, Sardašt), (*derakht-e*)



šā(h)ašraft (Shiraz); other Kurdish (Sorānī) names (recorded by Šarafkandī, s.vv.) include: *bavz*, *dār-a řaš* (black tree), *nār(a)vand*, *vezem*, and *dār-tōfāna* (mosquito tree); W. B. Henning (pp. 71, 72) has reported Ṭāleši *vezmado* and Kōnsārī *vezvā* as well as two old dialectal names, *gōzbe* (Zābolestān) and *gozm* (eastern Persia, Samarkand, and Sīstān). 6. *U. “umbraculifera”* (= *U. campestris* L. var. *umbraculifera* Trautv., *U. densa* Litw., etc.), a very variable elm of controversial taxonomic identity, which Zieliński (pp. 5-6) considers not a species but a clone of *U. minor*, “cultivated from time immemorial as a shade tree in dry regions of central and south-west Asia;” reported as cultivated in Kabul, and “almost everywhere in Persia” (especially in central Persia, Kermānšāh, and Māzandarān; Zieliński, *ibid.*; Kātamsāz, p. 8) called *nārvan-e čatrī* (canopy-like elm) in Tehran on account of its globular crown; usually grafted on *U. minor* (but non-grafted specimens, without a spherical crown, are found in Isfahan, where it is called *vesk*; Ṭābetī, Kātamsāz). 7. *U. glabra* Huds. (= *U. scabra* Mill., *U. montana* With., *U. elliptica* C. Koch, *U. corylifolia* Boreau, etc.); habitat: Republic of Azarbaijan (Talish), Caspian forests from Arasbārān to Gorgān, where it may reach 35-40 m. in height; local names: *qara-āgāj* (Arasbārān), *vezem* (Āstārā, Ṭavāleš), *loro/ūt*, *sorke* (Lāhījān, Rūdsar, Deylamān), *lo/ūngā* (Rāmsar, Šahsavār), *malaj/č*, *moloč* (Nūr, Kojūr, Kalārestāq), *malij* (Katūl, Rāmīān), *šeldār* (Mīnūdašt). 8. *U. boissieri* Grudz. (= *U. campestris* L. var. *microphylla* Boiss.); endemic in Persia; reported from Kermānšāhān (Qašr-e Šīrīn), Isfahan, Kermān (no specific local name recorded).

The hybrids include: 1. *U. glabra* X *minor*, reported from Āq Bolāg and Ḥasan-Beyglū (in Azarbaijan), Karesang (near Āmol, Māzandarān), and Karaj. 2. *U. minor* X *pumila*, reported from the environs of Shiraz. 3. *U. chumlia* X *wallichiana*, from Kabul (Zieliński, p. 8; Kātamsāz, p. 4). Ṭābetī has also reported *U. glabra* Huds. var. *pendula* Rehd., named *nārvan-e majnūn*, with stiffly drooping branches, imported to Persia in 1315 Š./1936-37 and later propagated as an ornamental tree.

Uses of elm wood. Hard, inflexible, and durable, elm wood (especially that of *U. minor*) is used locally in Persia by cartwrights in making beams, pillars, boat parts, *lāvak/lo(v)ak* (a kind of round, shallow wooden tub or platter; Gīlakī *lāk*), *qand-e lāk* (Gīlakī; a *lāk* with a raised center on which lump sugar is chopped up with a special ax), etc. The *U. glabra* wood, less resistant to humidity than that of *U. minor*, is less valuable (Sāī; Ṭābetī).

Medicinal uses. Arab and Persian physicians and pharmacologists in the



Islamic period have added hardly anything new to what the Greeks (especially Dioscorides and Galen) had written about elm (see, e.g., Abū Manṣūr Mowaffaq Heravī, s.v. *šajarat al-baqq*, p. 204, and Avicenna, II/2, s.v. *dardār*, p. 293). Almost all parts of the elm tree were found to be “cold” and “dry” in the first degree and, consequently, astringent and *jālī* (cleansing, etc.); a decoction of the leaves or a salve of crushed leaves, etc., was used for dressing wounds, conglutinating ulcers and fractured bones, curing leprosy, etc.; the fresh bast, used as a swathing band around the fractured or contused part of the body, would soon heal the injury; the “moisture” in elm galls, which, upon drying up, “gives birth to mosquitoes,” if smeared on the face, would make the complexion radiant.

The elm in classical Persian language and literature. Several names for the elm—all out of use now except *nārvan*—are recorded in some classical Persian lexicons: *nārvān*, *nārvand*; *nāžīn*; *gožm* (cf. *gozm*, above); *sada*; *lāmešgar*; *koš-sāya* (Bīrūnī, s.v. *dardār*, p. 266; lit. “having a pleasant shade”); *sīāh-derakt* (black tree; cf. Turk. *qara-āgāj*, above). “The *narva/ān* [being] a very shapely tree of pleasant stature” (Enjū Šīrāzī, comp. 1032/1622-23; I, pp. 519-20), “the stature of the lovely ones (*qāmat-e kūbān*) may be compared to it on account of its proportionateness and uprightness” (Naḳjavānī, p. 254, s.v. *nārvan*, with an apt distich from Mo‘ezzī; for other quotations see Dehḳodā, s.v. *nārvan*).

Due to the homophony of the element *nār* (of unknown origin and meaning) in the compound word *nār-van* (lit. *nār* tree) with *nār* as the shortened form of *anār* “pomegranate,” some classical poets and lexicographers have misinterpreted *nārvan* as also meaning “pomegranate tree/shrub” (see examples in Deḳodā, loc. cit.; cf. also Edward G. Browne’s “wild pomegranates” for *Bīša-ye nārvan* “Elm forest/grove” in his translation of Ebn Esfandīār, p. 58, tr. p. 16).

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