

Ceratonia siliqua – Carob

Requires a very sunny position in any well-drained moderately fertile soil, it does well in calcareous, gravelly or rocky soils tolerating salt laden air and a pH in the range 6.2 to 8.6. The tree is very drought resistant, thriving even under arid conditions, the roots penetrating deep into the soil to find moisture.

This species tolerates temperatures down to about -5°C when in a suitable position. The young growth in Spring is frost-tender and so it is best to grow the plants in a position sheltered from the early morning sun.

The Carob is frequently cultivated in warm temperate zones for its edible seed and seed pods. Mature trees in a suitable environment can yield up to 400kg of seedpods annually.

The seed is very uniform in size and weight, it was the original 'carat' weight of jewellers.

This species has a symbiotic relationship with certain soil bacteria, these bacteria form nodules on the roots and fix atmospheric nitrogen. Some of this nitrogen is utilized by the growing plant but some can also be used by other plants growing nearby.

Propagation

Seed – Pre-soak for 24 hours in warm water prior to sowing. If the seed has not swollen then give it another soaking in warm water until it does swell up. Sow in a medium propagation mix and keep the medium warm and moist but not damp. Germination should take place within 2 months.

As soon as seedlings are large enough to handle, prick the seedlings out into individual deep pots and grow them on for at least their first winter. Plant them out into their permanent positions in late Spring or early Summer after the last expected frosts. Give them some protection from the cold for their first few winters outdoors.