

## SCIENTIFIC NAME

# CAPPARIS SPINOSA

## FAMILY

# CAPPARIDACEA

## Description

The genus *Capparis* belongs to the *Capparidaceae* family. Wild species of *Capparis* are found in countries surrounding the Mediterranean basin extending to the Great Sahara in North Africa and the dry regions of Western and Central Asia. There are many important caper species of which *Capparis spinosa* is the most important one.



### Trunk

Woody based stem and a herbaceous upper part, often 3 metres in length, gives the plant its characteristic and attractive aspect.



### Foliage

Evergreen, oval or rounded, straight edged and shiny, intense and green coloured, these leaves contribute to make this a valid ornamental plant.



### Flowers

Bright, perfumed, white or pale pink flowers of the *Capparis spinosa* are rather large with numerous long purple central stamens. Flowering is prolonged and from May to September continual floral buttons are formed. Pick unopened buds. Conserve under salt or in brine. Highly appreciated in gastronomy.



## Habitat

Capers grow spontaneously along the Mediterranean coast and in tropical and sub-tropical zones. Prefers a poor, sandy sublayer of earth, rich in calcium and well-drained. This shrub can grow very well on dry heat and under intense sunlight and can tolerate low temperature.



## Harvest

The harvesting of these highly appreciated round, green aromatic flowering buttons is continual.

## Storage

Once washed, place under salt for some days and squash. Eliminate liquid and store in vinegar, olive oil or under salt. Most of these species are used as gourmet food in some countries.

Fruits of *C. spinosa*, also known as caper berries, are ellipsoid, ovoid to pear-shaped.

From nutritional point of view, berries of *C. spinosa* possess carbohydrate content (5%), dietary fibers (3%), protein (2%), and lipids (0.9%). It contains moderate content of vitamin C.



## Usage

### Health

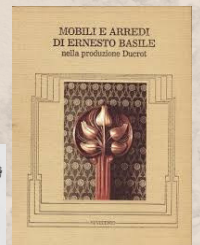
It is a multipurpose plant and used for the curing of various human ailments including gastro-intestinal problems, strangury, inflammation, emmenagogue, anemia, liver dysfunction, rheumatism, antispasmodic analgesic; anthelmintic; antihaemorrhoidal; aperient; deobstruent; depurative; diuretic; expectorant; and general body tonic in indigenous, Ayurvedic, Chinese and Unani system of medicines.

### Culinary

*Capparis spinosa* has peculiar aroma and therefore, used in pasta sauces, pizza, fish, meats and salads in many places. The young fruits and tender branch tips are used in pickled and also as a condiment agent. The tender young shoots including immature small leaves are eaten as a vegetable. Additionally, ash from burned caper roots has been used as a source of salt in indigenous system.



## Capparis in Liberty Style



In the early 1900s architect and free decorator Ernesto Basile, one of the pioneers of Art Nouveau, was inspired by the sinuous lines of the caper plant. The motif of the caper flower was also used as logo of Ducrot furniture factory in Palermo