The jujube (Ziziphus jujuba Mill.), a multipurpose plant.—Although it is unknown to most westerners, the jujube is one of the world’s major fruit crops and is cultivated in India, Russia, the Middle East, southern Europe, and especially China. This remarkable plant merits even wider cultivation (6, 10, 14, 17). A small, graceful tree, the jujube produces strong wood, has medicinal properties, and yields honey, in addition to fruit. This note will briefly describe the plant, summarize information previously available only in Chinese, and provide new information about it in the southeastern United States.

Nomenclature. Synonyms for this plant are Ziziphus vulgaris Lam., Rhamnus ziziphus L., Ziziphus sativa Gaertn., and Ziziphus zizyphus (L.) Karsten. Several varieties (lageniformis, inermis, jujuba, spinosa) are differentiated. Ziziphus jujuba Lam. is the same plant as Ziziphus mauritiana.

Other common names are anab, bedara, ber (usually applied to Ziziphus mauritiana), beri, bidara, bor, Chinese date, Chinese jujube, French jujube, kankole, ilantai, ma-tan, masan, onab, taotau, tsao, and zao.

Natural History, History, and Cultivation.

The jujube is one of many species of Ziziphus (Rhamnaceae) that produce edible fruit (16), but only one other species of Ziziphus, the cold-sensitive Indian jujube (Ziziphus mauritiana), is widely cultivated for its fruit (see 12). The present natural distribution of the jujube is from southeastern Europe to China (1), and it has become infrequently naturalized in the southeastern United States (5). Accounts of its original range vary, but humans moved it from the Middle East to Rome, where it was known by Pliny (2). It has been cultivated for 4000 years in China, as inferred by its association with rice culture in the Book of Songs, the famous poem of the 10th century B.C. (15). Today, approximately 40 cultivars (4, 9) are grown in Beijing and in the Hebei, Shandong, Shanxi, and Henan provinces of China (Jane Zhang pers. comm.). Annual fruit production in China is 450 000 long tons produced on 290 000 hectares (6). To give perspec-
tive, jujube hectarage in China is equivalent to citrus hectarage in Florida.

Jujubes in the United States. In 1908, Frank Meyer, a USDA plant explorer, introduced the first cultivars into the U.S. Recently, Roger Meyer (no relation) has introduced several Chinese and Russian cultivars. In addition, some cultivars have been selected locally from seedlings (Travis Callahan pers. comm.).

In the U.S., the jujube is primarily a dooryard fruit tree (see back cover), but a few small-hectare commercial plantings primarily serve ethnic niche markets in California. Many attributes of the jujube favor its wider adoption. In general, the plant has few pests. Although it is better adapted to arid regions, it will tolerate a range of climatic conditions (see 11), including the humid Gulf Coast region (8; Travis Callahan pers. comm.). The jujube will grow in different soils and is resistant to alkalinity and salinity. It has a low chill requirement, yet it is cold hardy. The bloom period allows it to escape late-spring frosts and the long blooming period (4) is a decided advantage to beekeepers. Fruiting is usually precocious and regular; some cultivars consistently bear heavily. On the other hand, jujube culture is not entirely carefree. First, the tree is potentially weedy because it forms root sprouts. Second, under some climatic conditions, some fruits split, and in addition, a portion of the fruit spoils before maturity. Finally, the jujube fruit is a host of the Caribbean fruit fly (Anastrepha suspensa) (Wayne Sherman pers. comm.), which is present in restricted areas of the U.S. In summary, the jujube is not immune to all problems, but it is a plant that withstands neglect and requires few inputs.

In the southeastern U.S., long-time favorite cultivars are ‘Tigertooth’ (synonym, ‘Silverhill’) and ‘Li’ (synonyms? ‘Geant’, ‘Leon Burk’, ‘Swoboda’), but many other cultivars also fruit here (Travis Callahan pers. comm.). Because of its status as a minor fruit, only one university, Alabama A&M, has an on-going study of the adaptation of jujube in this region, where the tree usually only achieves the size of a dogwood. Two adapted cultivars double as unique