

***Calligonum comosum* L'Herit.**  
Polygonaceae



Compiled by Dr. Salima Benhouhou

■ **Morphological description**

A tall woody shrub, reaching 2-3 m. in height, much branched from the base. The branches are dark green, articulate and very quickly lose their small linear leaves. The flowers are found at the base of the nodes and at the ends of the branches. Six small tepals form the perianth with conspicuous red anthers. The fruit is a single circular carpel, not exceeding 1 cm. in diameter and covered with brown-yellow hairs when ripe.

*Calligonum comosum* produces numerous flowers in the early spring (March, April).

■ **Geographical distribution**

**Local:** Well represented in sandy sites in the northern Sahara and rare in the central Algerian Sahara.

**Regional:** North Africa.

**Global:** Its general distribution goes from the North African deserts to the desert sands of the Middle East and as far east as the Rajputana desert in western India.

■ **Ecology**

This hardy shrub grows in arid, sandy ecosystems where the annual rainfall does not exceed 100 mm. A strict psammophil, *Calligonum comosum* thrives on sandy soils, often stabilising the surrounding sand in large hummocks and reaching the water-table with its long taproots.

■ **Status**

According to the IUCN criteria this saharo-sindian species falls into the "C" category.

***Calligonum comosum* L'Hér. Linn. Soc. i. (1791) 180.** *Calligonum polygonoides* L.

*Calligonum*: from kallos, beauty, and gonu, a knee-joint (referring to its leafless joint); *comosum*: long-haired

**Arabic:** ouarach, larta

**Targui:** aresu

Due to its frequent use, it is threatened, with decreasing populations near settlements. Conservation and propagation measures should be considered for this species.

■ **Part used**

The young shoots and leaves are picked in spring, prepared as a powder and used externally as an ointment.

■ **Constituents**

*Calligonum comosum* is known to be rich in proteins. No other data has been found regarding the active principles of this plant.

**Pharmacological action and toxicit**

Anti-inflammatory and anti-ulcer action.

■ **Pharmacopeias**

Not relevant for this species

■ **Pharmaceutical products**

Not relevant for this species.

■ **Traditional medicine and local knowledge**

It is used for gastric problems and is frequently used to treat scabies in dromedaries.

The fresh flowers can be eaten. An analysis of its food value has shown the plant to be high in sugar and nitrogenous components. The Tuareg dry the young shoots to prepare a nourishing meal. Its branches make excellent firewood. It is also used for tanning skin.

## ■ References

### Relevant to the plant and its uses

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