

LOCAL NAMES

English (giant yellow mulberry,corkwood)

BOTANIC DESCRIPTION

Myrianthus arboreus is a dioecious tropical tree up to 15 m high with spreading branches from a short stem. Usually has stilt roots. Trunk short, dividing into a spreading crown.

Leaves very large, alternately shaped, 5-7 digitately compound, coarsely toothed, with hood like stipules the central leaflet is about 25 x 9 cm. Young leaves are usually red in colour.

Male inflorescences yellow, much branched and panicle like are produced in large axillary pairs in the latter part of the dry season. The female inflorescences are paired, stalked greenish clusters (pedunculate), each flower with a thick curled style projecting out of the fused calyx, and a basal ovule.

Fruit a syncarp of basally fused, yellow false drupes up to 10 cm, with styler remains projecting from each drupe.

The generic name *Myrianthus* refers to the great number of flowers borne on the inflorescences, the specific name means 'tree like'. Some authors place the genera *Myrianthus* and *Musanga* in a separate family, *Cecropiaceae*.

BIOLOGY

The primates *Cercopithecus nictitans*, *C. neglectus* and *Galago alleni* contribute to seed dispersal. Seed ingestion improves germination in *M. arboreus*. *M. arboreus* is dioecious.

ECOLOGY

M. arboreus is found in forest and damp places.

BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS

Altitude: 700-1200 m, Mean annual rainfall: 1400-4000 mm, Mean annual temperature: 16-26 deg.C

Soil type: Prefers damp soils.

DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION

Native: Angola, Cameroon, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda

Exotic:



The map above shows countries where the species has been planted. It does neither suggest that the species can be planted in every ecological zone within that country, nor that the species can not be planted in other countries than those depicted. Since some tree species are invasive, you need to follow biosafety procedures that apply to your planting site.

PRODUCTS

Food: The sweet pulp around the seeds is edible and the young leaves are eaten as a vegetable.

Timber: The wood may be used for general purposes.

Medicine: *M. arboreus* has various medicinal uses in Africa, including the treatment of dysentery and diarrhoea with bark infusions. Seeds are used for boils. The bark decoction is administered for diabetes. Other medicinal uses are for headaches, swellings and tumours.

Poison: *M. arboreus* extracts deter the termite *R. lucifugus*.

Other products: *M. arboreus* potash is used for soap making.

SERVICES

Reclamation: Can be planted in damp/ swampy soils.

Nitrogen fixing: Has the ability to improve nitrogen levels due to its mycorrhizal associations.

Soil improver: Leaf litter of *M. arboreus* improves soil fertility.

FURTHER READNG

Abbiw D. 1990. Useful plants of Ghana. Intermediate Technology Publications and the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew.

Hladik CM and Hladik A. 1967. The role of primates in the dissemination of plants in the forest of Gabon. *Biologia Gabonica*, Paris. 3 (1): 43-58

Hutchinson J and Dalziel JM. 1954. *Flora of West Tropical Africa*, Vol. 1, Part1. Crown Agents for Overseas Administrations.

Sommerlatte H. & Sommerlatte M.1990. A field guide of the trees and shrubs of the Imatong Mountains of Southern Sudan. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, Nairobi.

Steentoft M. 1988. Flowering plants in West Africa. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Tamboue Deffo E and Nekam P. 1993. Chemical study of some anti-diarrhoea plants used in the central province of Cameroon. *Revue de Medecines et Pharmacopees Africaines*. 7(2): 97-107.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Orwa C, A Mutua, Kindt R , Jamnadass R, S Anthony. 2009 *Agroforestry Database:a tree reference and selection guide version 4.0* (<http://www.worldagroforestry.org/sites/treedbs/treedatabases.asp>)