

LOCAL NAMES

English (tallow-tree, mkanyi fat, kagne butter); Italian (ouotera, bouandjo); Swahili (mkimbo); Yoruba (usonige, orogbo, egba)

BOTANIC DESCRIPTION

Allanblackia floribunda is an evergreen forest tree confined to tropical Africa, to 30 m tall. Bole straight, occasionally fluted. Bark dark brown, patchy; slash thin, reddish at the surface, yellow beneath, exuding a sticky yellow juice. Branches slender, drooping and often conspicuously whorled.

Leaves opposite, 8-22 cm long by 2-4.5 cm wide; elliptic elongated, or somewhat oblanceolate, abruptly and sharply acuminate, cuneate or rounded at the base; with many pairs of very thin lateral nerves running at a wide angle to the midrib; stalk stout, 1-2 cm long.

Flower unisexual, monoecious, pink or red, very fragrant, up to 5 cm across when expanded and 1.5 cm across in bud. Stalk 2.5-6 cm long with 5 unequal overlapping, rounded and concave sepals. Petals 5, rounded about 2 cm long. Male flowers in a terminal raceme, crowded towards the apex of the drooping branches. Stamen-bundle flattened, club-like, yellow, waxy, about 1.5 cm long. Female flowers with similar sepals and petals; stamens reduced to staminodes; ovary ovoid, 1.5 cm long, glabrous with 2-4 ovules per locules, arranged in 2 rows; with the large 5-lobed stigmas forming a cap over the apex.

Fruit is an ovoid 5-lobed berry-like drupe 9-20 cm long and 7-14 cm in diameter with tough flesh, hanging at the end of a short stalk.

Seeds are brittle-shelled, 2-5 cm long by 1.5-3.2 cm in diameter, 40-50 per fruit, embedded in a pinkish gelatinous pulp.

The generic name is after Allan Black, a 19th century Kew botanist. The specific name 'floribunda' describes the abundant flowering in this species, making showy displays.

BIOLOGY

Flowering occurs in September to February with fruits developing slowly, but in Nigeria they are available in most seasons. Short-tongued insects pollinate this species. Monkeys such as *Lophocebus albigena*, *Cercopithecus pogonias*, *Cercopithecus cephus*, *Cercopithecus pogonias* and *Cercopithecus nictitans* eat the flowers and fruits, thus dispersing the seeds.

ECOLOGY

A. floribunda is found in the upper-storey, evergreen rain-forest on steep rocky gorge slopes associated with other tree species such as Cyathea camerooniana, Oxythenanthera abyssinica, Parinari excelsa, Ficus congensis, Terminalia ivorensis and Musanga cecropioides.

BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS

Altitude: 1 000-1500 m

Mean annual temperature: Quite extreme on the mountain slopes, with maximum temperatures ranging between 24-33 Deg C while minimum can fall below 10 Deg C.

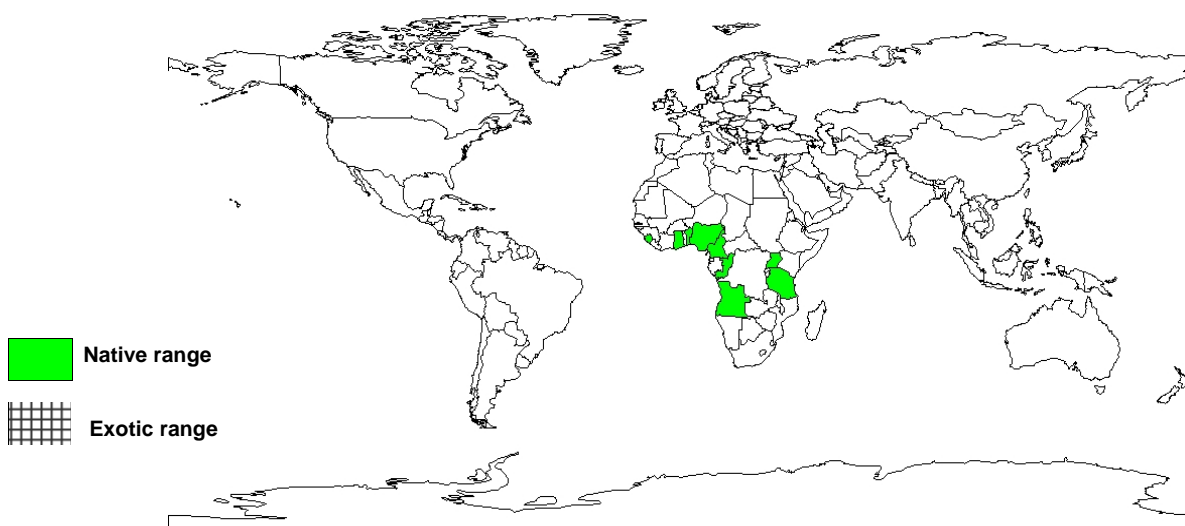
Mean annual rainfall: 1200-2400 mm.

Soil type: Prefers well-drained soil especially lithosols.

DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION

Native: Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, 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: Seeds and fruits are edible. The seeds yield a vegetable butter while the bitter seedcake is used as an animal feed. In Amani (Tanzania), the seeds were extensively used as a butter substitute in manufacture of chocolate during the First World War

Apiculture: It's a bee's forage

Timber: It produces a fairly durable timber suitable for use under damp conditions especially in harbours, bridges piers and pit props. The wood is resistant to marine borers.

Medicine: In Ghana, the pounded bark is used as a pain reliever for toothache and against diarrhoea. There is an on-going research at the National Cancer Institute-Frederick Cancer Research and Development Center, USA on HIV-inhibitory activities from its extracts.

Lipids: Seeds yield an edible fat used in cooking, soap making and cosmetics industry. Seed kernels amount to 60-80% of the whole seed weight. The unusual hard white fat consists almost entirely of stearic acid (52-58%) and oleic acids. Oleic acid (39-45%) proportion can be extracted from the kernels. Therefore it has a considerable attention, based on its unusual fat composition in that the stearic acid is very high (above 50%), rather than its commercial importance.

TREE MANAGEMENT

This is a potential plantation species that should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil.

GERMPLASM MANAGEMENT

Seed storage behaviour is recalcitrant. There are about 200 seeds/kg.

FURTHER READING

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SUGGESTED CITATION

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