

LOCAL NAMES

English (yellow wood, silver terminalia)

BOTANIC DESCRIPTION

T. sericea is common as a shrub or bush 6-9 m tall, but individual trees may reach 23 m in height. The bark is dark grey or brownish often peeling, exposing a brownish under-bark. Young stems and branches often parasitized and bear longish round galls often up to 2-3 cm in diameter frequently with leaves.

Leaves narrowly obovate-elliptic, blue-green, 5.5-12 by 1.5-4.5 cm, clustered towards the tips of the slender branchlets and covered with silvery silky hairs; petiole up to 10 mm long.

The flowers are powerfully and rather unpleasantly scented, small, yellowish green, in axillary spikes up to 7 cm long

Fruits one-seeded, oval, 2.5-3.5 by 1.5-2.5 cm, single-winged and soft pink to rose red when mature, darkening to brown or red brown with age. They are sometimes parasitized and become deformed, twisted and hairy.

The generic name 'Terminalia' comes from Latin word 'terminus' or 'terminalis' (ending), and refers to the habit of the leaves being crowded or borne on the tips of the shoots.

BIOLOGY

It flowers in September and January and fruits in January to May, fruit remaining on the tree almost until the next flowering season. Pollination is usually by flies.



Young leaves with silver hairs, giving the tree a characteristic silver shine. Simple leaves, spirally arranged and clustered at the end of the branches. (Ellis RP)



The leaves are clustered towards the tips of the branches; 55-120 x 15-45 mm large and densely covered with silky, silvery hairs. The branchlets are dark brown or purplish; peeling in rings and strips. (Botha R)



Detail of the small, cream flowers which are borne in axillary spikes. (Botha R)

ECOLOGY

T. sericea is scattered in open woodlands, sometimes dominant or co-dominant in mixed deciduous forests. It is adaptable to drought and moderately adaptable to saline soils. It can tolerate some frost. *T. sericea* is reported to form dense thickets when cut or burnt, and becomes weedy, preventing the growth of grass.

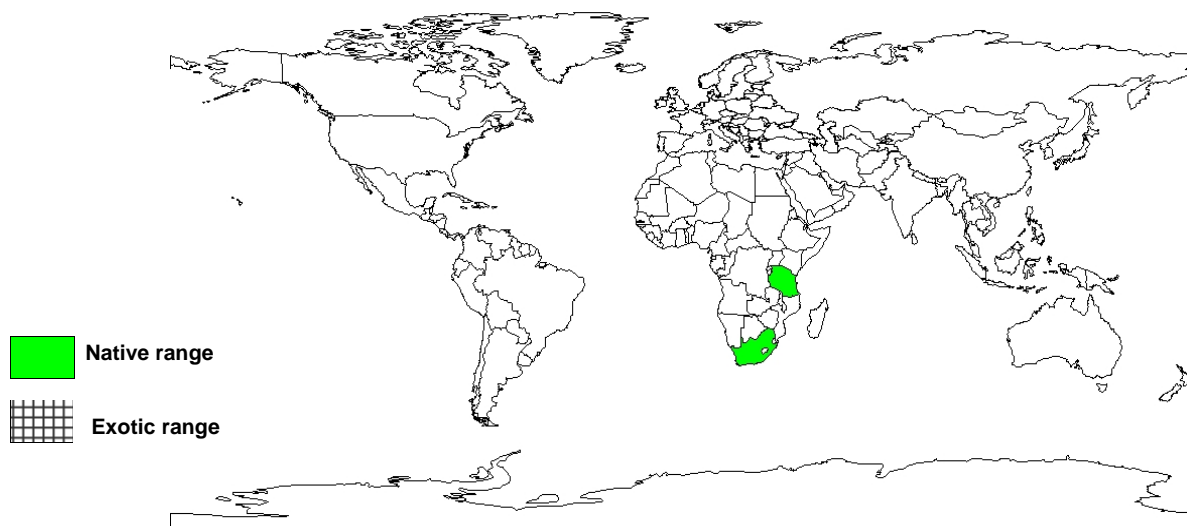
BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS

Soil type: prefer loamy sand

DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION

Native: South Africa, Tanzania

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

Timber: The wood is yellow, hard, heavy, very tough and resistant to both termites and borers. It is used extensively for construction, furniture, fence posts, tool handles and as a general-purpose timber. The bark is cut into strips and used as a rope to hang beehives. The roots are also cut into strips and used as a strong rope for hut construction.

Fuel: The species make good charcoal and firewood

Food: The plant produces an edible gum. During the rainy season, caterpillars feeding on the leaves of this shrub are an important source of food.

Medicine: Diarrhea and colic were cured by African tribes by using a decoction of the roots. This decoction is very bitter. The leaves are used against stomach disorders and as a cough remedy. Nerifolin, a glucoside, which affects the pulse rate, has been isolated from parts of the silver Terminalia

SERVICES

Soil improver: The tree improves sites by draining waterlogged soils, shading out weeds, and enriching impoverished soils. It is recommended for reforestation, agroforestry, and land improvement purposes.

Erosion Control: In Southern Africa, it is used to control erosion.

TREE MANAGEMENT

T. sericea is adaptable to drought, moderately saline soils and some frost. It is reported to form dense thickets when cut or burnt, and becomes weedy, preventing the growth of grass. The species is aggressive, usually easily established as it shades out weeds

FURTHER READING

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SUGGESTED CITATION

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