Polyscias kikuyuensis

Summerh.

Araliaceae

mutati

LOCAL NAMES
English (parasol tree); Trade name (mutati)

BOTANIC DESCRIPTION
Polyscias kikuyuensis is a tall tree up to 25 m often with an unbranched bole up to 12 m tall and 1.2 m in diameter.

Leaves up to 55 cm long, imparipinnate, less frequently paripinnate; leaflets 3-6 pairs, coriaceous, rarely chartaceous, lanceolate to narrowly ovate, very occasionally rotund, often straight-edged or oblique, up to 14.5 cm long by 6.5 wide, sometimes larger in saplings, acute to acuminate, rarely emarginate, with a rounded to cordate (often subcordate) base, with the margins entire, often very narrowly inrolled, densely stellate-tomentose when young, later glabrescent to some extent, especially above where occasionally glabrous, petiolules of paired leaflets 2-14 mm long.

Inflorescence branches puberulous to tomentose; primaries up to 40 cm long by 2.5 -4 cm diameter, both orders racemosely borne; pedicels up to 9 mm (commonly 2-5 mm) long by 0.5-0.8 mm diameter in umbellules. Flowers yellow.

Fruits black, flattened ovoid, elliptical or cylindrical, 4-7.5 mm long, ribbed, apart from the stylopodia and persistent styles densely covered with stellate hairs.

P. kikuyuensis is endemic to Kenya and is indistinguishable from P. fulva except when in flower, its calyces are densely stellate and the flowers are placed in umbels on secondary inflorescence branches, unlike the latter whose flowers are in panicles and has glabrous panicles.

The generic name is derived from poly-‘many’; scias-‘shade’, referring to the abundant foliage of members of this genus. The specific epithet refers to one of the plant’s endemic distribution localities in Kenya.

ECOLOGY
P. kikuyuensis thrives in mountain climate types, found in upland rain-forest in the Aberdare ranges, Taita hills, Lari area, Meru and Nakuru districts of Kenya.

BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS
Altitude: 1 750-2 750 m

DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION

Native: Kenya
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
Fuel: Generally offers poor quality fuelwood.

Timber: Produces soft white wood used in boxmaking; the tree trunk can be useful in beehive making.

SERVICES
Erosion control: Can be used in protecting riverbanks.

Shade or shelter: P. kikuyuensis offers a mild shade with its high leaf crown.

Soil improver: The leaf litter can serve well as mulch; usually soil under the tree is quite fertile.

Ornamental: P. kikuyuensis is a graceful fast-growing tree suitable for planting in gardens or avenues.

Intercropping: The tree has a high crown offering little shade unlikely to harm other crops.

TREE MANAGEMENT
P. kikuyuensis grows faster than most indigenous highland trees and needs about 6 months in the nursery if grown from seed.

GERMPLASM MANAGEMENT
Seed storage behaviour orthodox; seeds tolerate desssication to 4.5% moisture content. Viability can be maintained for several years in hermetic storage 3 deg C with 7-10% moisture content.

FURTHER READNG

Beentje HJ. 1994. Kenya trees, shrubs and lianas. National Museums of Kenya.

CABI. 2000. Global Forestry Compendium. CD-ROM. CABI

Eggeling. 1940. Indigenous trees of Uganda. Govt. of Uganda.

Tennant JR. 1968. Araliaceae. In: Flora of Tropical East Africa. AA Balkema, Rotterdam.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Orwa C, Mutua A , Kindt R , Jamnadass R, Simons A. 2009. Agroforestree Database:a tree reference and selection guide version 4.0 (http://www.worldagroforestry.org/af/treedb/)