

LOCAL NAMES

English (west African albizia, rough-bark flat crown, flat crown); Swahili (mchani-mbawe, mchani-mabo); Xhosa (umHlandlothi, platkroon); Zulu (uSolo, umNebelele, umNalahanga, umHlandlothi, iGowane)

BOTANIC DESCRIPTION

Albizia adianthifolia grows from 6-15 m high. Crown flat, wide-spreading. The trunk is tall and straight, the bark grey and fairly smooth or sometimes roughish, crocodile flaking.

Pinnae 5-8 pairs 9 (rarely only 3 on occasional reduced leaves), each pinna about narrowing upwards; leaflets of 2 distal pairs of pinnae (8) 9-17 pairs mostly c. 7-17 (24) x 4-9(15) mm, obliquely rhombic-quadrate or oblong; proximate margin at base usually obtuse and mucronate, sometimes subacate, surface of leaflet thinly pubescent above, rather plentifully pubescent all over beneath, raised venation beneath closed. Stipules and bracts at base of peduncles c. 5-12 x 3-6(8) mm, ovate. Peduncles clothed as the young brachlets; bracteoles variably persistent, 5-8 mm long, exceeding the flower buds, linear-spathulate to oblanceolate.

Flowers sub-sessile; pedicel pubescent, 0.5-1(2) mm long; calyx 2.5-5 (rarely only 2) mm. long, pubescent outside. Corolla 6-11 mm long, white or greenish-white, pubescent, outside. The staminal tube exerted c. 1.3-2.5 cm beyond the corolla, red to wholly greenish or pink.

Pods dehiscent 9-19 x 1.9-3.4(4.3) cm, usually pale brown, oblong, flat or slightly transversely plicate, densely and persistently pubescent, not glossy, prominently venose.

Seeds 7-9.5 x 6.5-8.5 mm, flattened.

The genus was named after Filippo del Albizzi, a Florentine nobleman who in 1749 introduced *A. julibrissin* into cultivation.

BIOLOGY

Flowers appear in March and April. Young fruits are conspicuous from July onwards and are ripe by December or January. The tree is often leafless between February and April in some parts of its natural distribution range such as Sierra Leone.

ECOLOGY

A. adianthifolia has a wide range of habitat, and ecotypes may be recognizable. It is not however, a particularly variable plant. The tree is conspicuous and common on forest margins or in open forests from South Africa through tropical Africa to Ethiopia in the north. Wherever it grows its flat wide-spreading crown and horizontally growing leaves distinguish it from the surrounding trees.

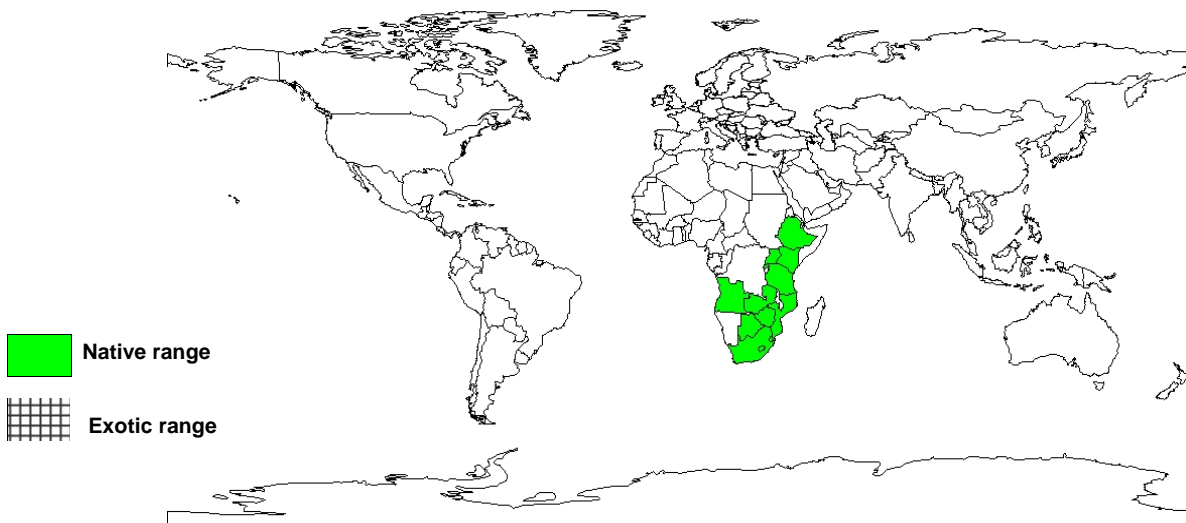
BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS

Altitude: 250-400 m

DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION

Native: Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

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 local people in southern Africa make a sauce from the seeds.

Timber: The wood is clean, light, soft, straight-grained, used largely for naves in South Africa and suitable for many other general purposes. The wood works well with a good finish. The colour is golden yellow, sometimes with greenish tinge, making attractive-coloured parquet floors.

Gum or resin: *A. adianthifolia* produces a sweet smelling gum of somehow inferior quality.

Medicine: The bark is poisonous but is used medicinally by the Zulu of South Africa who make a love charm emetic from it. They also prepare an infusion (hot or cold) from the bark and roots to treat skin diseases like scabies. A cold extract from the roots alone is applied to the inflamed eye. In Mozambique, the bark is a remedy for bronchitis.

Other products: *A. adianthifolia* is a source of three flavonoids (okanin, melanoxetin and dihydroflavonol).

SERVICES

Erosion control: In the highland of west Cameroon, farmers plant contour bunds with perennial legumes such as *A. adianthifolia* for soil conservation purposes. The erection of these bunds lead to gradual terracing on the slopes ("inducted terracing").

Shade or shelter: The tree is valued for the shade it provides to tea and cacao plantations.

Ornamental: This is a beautifully shaped tree and could be used with advantage in gardens and streets.

Intercropping: Many farmers plant this tree on hilly ground for soil conservation purposes, often inter-cropped with food crops.

Other services: At least two handsome butterflies with blue markings, the blue spotted charaxes (*Charaxes cithaeron*) and the satyx charaxes (*Charaxes ethalion*) breed on this species in the Natal province of South Africa.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

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