

Indigenous

Common names: **Ateso K:** Ekodokodwo **Ateso T:** Ekonoit **English:** Sudan gum arabic, three-thorned acacia **Lugbara:** Bina **Luo A:** Lakido, achika **Luo L:** Alal, okutokech.

Ecology: An Acacia common in arid and semi-arid zones throughout Africa. Very drought resistant and tolerates high daily temperatures and long dry seasons. The extensive lateral root system helps to bind soil together. In Uganda it is widely distributed in Kotido and Moroto and in the northern part of Luwero Districts where it is commonly found in wooded grassland, deciduous bushland and dry scrub with trees, 600-1,700 m.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, poles, tool handles, food (seeds), medicine (roots), fodder (pods and leaves), nitrogen fixation, soil conservation, gum, dye (seeds), live and dry fences.

Description: A shrub or tree to 12 m, rounded, many low branches. **BARK:** waxy, smooth, then **peeling yellow and papery from red-brown base**. **THORNS:** prickles in threes, the central one hooked downwards, the two laterals curved up, brown to black. **LEAVES:** bipinnate, usually hairy, only 3-6 pairs of pinnae, on a stalk to 7 cm, leaflets grey-green, small and narrow. **FLOWERS:** **creamy spikes**, one or more, 2-8 cm long, fragrant, usually develop before the rainy season, buds are red. **FRUIT:** pods, variable, thin and flat, oblong, about 10 cm long to 3 cm across, soft **grey-yellow becoming papery brown, veins clear**, few seeds.

Propagation: Seedlings, direct sowing at site.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: 8,000-11,200. Susceptible to beetle attack, germination is uniform and good, up to 70% after 15 days.

treatment: not necessary for fresh seed; for stored seed nick or soak in cold water for 24 hours.

storage: stores well if kept cool, dry and insect free. Add ash to reduce insect damage.

Management: Slow growing, needs protection from animals during early stages of growth; lopping, coppicing, pruning if intercropped. Caution: this tree has vicious spines which will hinder movement for management of a young agricultural crop. It is thus necessary to do pruning as early as possible.

Remarks: Can be intercropped (sorghum, millet). Gum production is excellent when growing in poor soils. Gum arabic can be obtained by bark tapping and is a valuable additive in the food and pharmaceutical industry. The gum is superior to that of all other Acacias. The Sudan is the major commercial exporter.

