

# Acacia lahai

# Mimosaceae

Indigenous

**Common names:** **English:** Red thorn **Sebei:** Ematso, kaimet.

**Ecology:** One of the umbrella thorns of cooler uplands occurring in woodlands and wooded grassland, 1,800-2,500 m. In Uganda it occurs in Kapchorwa (e.g. near Kaburon), Moroto (e.g. near Karakau) and Mbale Districts. It has almost disappeared in many areas of Kotido, Moroto and Kapchorwa Districts due to intense use.

**Uses:** Firewood, charcoal, timber (heavy construction, bridges), posts, shade, dye (bark).

**Description:** A conspicuously **flat-topped tree** to 15 m. **BARK:** grey to dark brown, rough, grooved; branchlets brown, hairy. **THORNS:** straight, grey-brown, small but up to 7 cm long. **LEAVES:** bipinnate, **leaf stalk 2-8 cm with 6-15 pairs pinnae** bearing many tiny **pointed** leaflets. **FLOWERS:** **cream-yellow spikes to 7 cm**, flowering **branchlets covered with red gland dots**. **FRUIT:** **short and wide pods, to 7 cm**, straight or curved, shiny brown, splitting on the tree to set free seed.

**Propagation:** Seedlings.

**Seed:** No. of seeds per kg: about 4,000. Many seeds are damaged by insects while still in the pods. These can be separated from good seeds through immersion in water: bad seeds float,

**treatment:** not necessary, but soaking in cold water for 12 hours enhances germination.

**storage:** seed can be stored for long periods if kept cool, dry and insect free. Add ash to reduce insect damage.

**Management:** Slow growing, lopping.

**Remarks:** The tree is not well suited for combination with crops due to its broad canopy and heavy shade. Bark crushed in water can be sprinkled on hot pots to colour them red. The tree has been over-exploited and requires immediate attention in many areas to ensure its survival. In Kapchorwa its natural habitat is being increasingly converted to farm land, while in Moroto the main reason for its disappearance is cutting for charcoal.

