

Acacia polyacantha* subsp. *campylacantha

Fabaceae (Mimosaceae)

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Bajun:** Mkengewa; **English:** Falcon's-claw acacia; **Kamba:** Kivovoa, Mwelele, Musewa (Kitui); **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumukokwe; **Luo:** Ogongo, Suahowe, Swaruri; **Swahili:** Mkengewa.

DESCRIPTION: A tree to 18 m with an open canopy. **BARK:** Ash-grey to yellow brown, scaling, old trees deeply grooved. **THORNS:** In pairs, just below the nodes, brown with black tips, small, to 10 mm and hooked, sometimes absent. **LEAVES:** Leaflets very small, numerous and narrow, leaf stalk hairy with glands. **FLOWERS:** Large, cream-white spikes, to 12 cm, 2 or 3 together, fragrant. **FRUIT:** Straight and flat smooth pods, brown, to 18 cm, tip pointed, splitting open.

ECOLOGY: A widespread acacia found from India to tropical Africa. In Kenya, found in wooded grassland and riverine woodland, 200–1,800 m, often in poorly drained soils. May indicate fertile soil and ground water but can also grow on stony soil. Common along Nairobi–Thika road, in Kisumu, South Nyanza, Narok, Taita-Taveta, Machakos and Kilifi. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber, tool handles, farm implements, medicine, edible gum, fodder (pods, leaves, seeds), bee forage, ornamental, nitrogen-fixing, soil conservation.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, wildings, direct sowing at site.

SEED: Seeds prolifically; 14,000–16,000 seeds per kg. Good seeds germinate in 10–20 days, germination rate 60–90%.

treatment: Immerse in hot water, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours or nick seed at cotyledon end.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods if kept insect free.

MANAGEMENT: Fast growing on good sites; pollarding, coppicing, pruning to avoid large branches breaking with heavy winds.

REMARKS: Wood is resinous, hence termite resistant. The tree is a host to many insects. Subsp. *polyacantha* is found in India.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Albrecht, 1993; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Dharani, 2002; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Kokwaro, 1993; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Storrs, 1979; von Maydell, 1990.

