

Acokanthera schimperi

Apocynaceae

Indigenous

- Common names:** **Eng:** common poison bush, poison-arrow tree; **Hehe:** msungu; **Samb:** mshunguti; **Swah:** mchungu; **Zana:** msungu.
- Ecology:** A tree of dry woodland, thickets and grasslands, 1,100-2,300 m, often at the margin of dry forest or forest remnants. Prefers rich well-drained forest soil but also grows on black cotton and poor soils in dry sites, for example in Loliondo forest.
- Uses:** Tools (spear shafts), food (ripe fruit), medicine (roots) ornamental, arrow poison (white latex from roots, leaf, bark).
- Description:** A shrub or small **rounded tree**, with **short bole**, to 5 m, sometimes 10 m. **BARK:** dark brown, grooved with age, young twigs flattened. **LEAVES:** opposite, dark shiny green above, **stiff and leathery, oval to rounded 4-7 cm, the tip pointed and sharp.** **FLOWERS:** appearing with early rains, in dense, **fragrant clusters**, almost stalkless, **white-pink, tubular.** **FRUITS:** **oval berries to 2.0 cm, red, becoming purple when ripe**, edible.
- Propagation:** Seedlings.
- Seed info.:** Seed germination is good but sporadic. No. of seeds per kg: 400-450.
- treatment:** No treatment required.
- storage:** Seeds have a high natural water content and therefore are difficult to store.
- Management:** A fairly fast-growing tree.
- Remarks:** The bark is used as poison for arrows and the whole tree except the fruit is poisonous so great care should be taken with any medicinal dosage. Children eat the ripe purple fruit, as do birds and monkeys.

