

Adansonia digitata

Bombacaceae

Indigenous

Common names: **Arusha:** mesera; **Eng:** baobab; **Gogo:** mpela; Goro: dakaumo; Hehe: mkondo; **Iraqw:** gendaryandi; **Lugu:** mpela; **Maasai:** ol mesera; **Mbug:** muwiye; **Pare:** mramba; **Rangi:** mwiwi Sand: gele; **Sangu:** mkondo; **Suku:** mwanda, mwandu, ngwandu; **Swah:** mbuyu.

Ecology: The baobab is a well-known tree of tropical Africa south of the Sahara. In Tanzania it grows from the coast to 1,250 m. It is one of the longest living trees in the world (about 3,000 years). Grows in most well-drained soils, is deep rooted, drought resistant and prefers a high watertable.

Uses: Utensils, fodder (leaves, fruit), food (shoots, fruit), drink (seed pulp), medicine (roots, bark), bee forage, string, rope (bark fibres), gum, resin, dye (roots).

Description: **A large deciduous tree**, the trunk diameter may reach 8m and often 20 m high. Bare for up to 9 months, the stiff bare branches resemble roots (upside-down tree). The trunk is sometimes hollow. **BARK: smooth, grey to 10 cm thick**, the spongy wood holding much water. **LEAVES:** mature leaves with **up to 9 leaflets arranged like the fingers of a hand**, **FLOWERS: large and white**, opening at night; the unpleasant smelling nectar attracts pollinating fruit bats. **FRUIT: hairy yellow-brown, very big capsules hang on long stalks** on the bare tree. About 100 seeds lie within white-pink, dry, edible pulp.

Propagation: Seedlings.

Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: 2,000-3,000. Germination is fair, but very sporadic, up to three months. Good well-treated seed can germinate in 30-50 days,

treatment: immerse in hot water, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours,

storage: seed can be stored for a long time if kept cool and dry.

Management: Fairly fast growing when young; lopping.

Remarks: The tree is fire and termite resistant and very much liked by elephants who eat the spongy tissues of the bole and can damage or destroy trees. The seeds are eaten by monkeys and humans.

