

Adenanthera pavonina

Fabaceae (Mimosaceae)

India, South East Asia

COMMON NAMES: **English:** Circassian bead tree, Red sandalwood tree.

DESCRIPTION: A deciduous, spreading tree, 4–20 m, with low leafy branches; hard, reddish heartwood. **LEAVES:** Compound, alternate, to 40 cm, the leaflets oval, 4 cm long, 2 cm wide, the tip rounded, short stalks. **FLOWERS:** Very small, yellow-brown on slender drooping stalks, fragrant. **FRUIT:** Brown, narrow pods, about 20 cm long, curved and bulging with seeds. Pods split into 2 twisted halves to show shiny scarlet seeds against the yellow inner pod. Seeds are flat, like pills, very hard.

ECOLOGY: A thornless tree from India and South East Asia. It has long been planted in the coastal areas of East Africa as an ornamental and shade tree, often naturalized, 0–300 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–III. Flowers in April, pods emerge in June and seeds ripen in September (coast).

USES: Firewood, timber, edible leaves, bee forage, shade, ornamental, beads, tannin, dye (red).

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, cuttings, direct sowing at site.

SEED: Hard seed; about 4,000 seeds per kg. Germination is good, up to 80–90% after only 7 days provided the seeds are treated. Germination of untreated seeds is erratic, may take 12 months.

treatment: Nick the hard seed coat, or immerse seed in hot water, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods.

MANAGEMENT: Fast growing on good sites.

REMARKS: Seeds are used as beads in South East Asia (Circassian seeds) and at one time as weights by goldsmiths, and roasted seeds are eaten. Raw seeds are poisonous. They are high in oil (25%) and protein (39%). The young leaves are used as a vegetable in India. The heartwood is hard and red.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Mbuya et al., 1994.

