

***Albizia saman* (*Samanea saman*)**

Fabaceae (Mimosaceae)

Tropical America**COMMON NAMES:** English: Saman, Rain tree, Monkey pod.

DESCRIPTION: A conspicuous **semi-deciduous tree** to 25 m tall when mature with a **short, thick trunk**. Its **branches spread horizontally** reaching an amazing 30 m occasionally. **BARK:** Distinctive yellow- to cream-brown, smooth or shallowly grooved. **LEAVES:** **Fern-like foliage**, twice-divided leaves at the end of branches, 25–40 cm long, with 2–4 pairs of leaf branches, and 3–8 pairs of leaflets that are bright green, oblong, to 6 cm long, longest pairs at the end of the stalk. **FLOWERS:** **Large stalked heads**, each flower with **fluffy pink stamens** from a cream-yellow base, 3–5 cm across, often in flower in the dry season. **FRUIT:** **Pods to 20 x 2 cm, thick, straight, green then black, with an edible sticky pulp** around the seeds. Pods do not break open.

ECOLOGY: Occurs naturally in open country and along streams in forests in the northern parts of South America. Does well at the Kenyan coast, preferring humid lowlands, 0–1,300 m, and well-watered soils. Tolerates a wide range of soils. Agroclimatic Zones I–III.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber, tools, carvings, utensils, edible fruit (sweet pulp of the pods), medicine (bark, leaves), fodder (pods), shade, ornamental, avenue tree, nitrogen-fixing, soil improvement, gum.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings.

SEED: 5,000–7,400 seeds per kg.

treatment: Immerse seed in hot water for 3 minutes, transfer to cool water and soak for 12–24 hours.

storage: Seed can be stored if well dried. Viability is maintained for more than 3 years if stored in airtight containers at room temperature.

MANAGEMENT: Fast growing in best conditions, mature in a few years; coppicing.

REMARKS: Widely grown as a street tree. Gone wild and now naturalized in lower parts of Tana River at the site of an old irrigation scheme. A popular tree at the coast. Provides excellent shade, and in some countries the timber is valued for furniture and carving. The leaves fold inward at night and in cool weather.

FURTHER READING : <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Beentje, 1994; Jensen, 1999; Katende et al., 1995; National Academy of Sciences, 1979; Storrs, 1979.

