

Anacardium occidentale

Anacardiaceae

Brazil, Caribbean

English: Cashew nut

Senga: Chikunichashaba

Ecology: One of the oldest cash crops, widely planted all over the tropics. Prefers sandy, deep soils but not saline ones, and can produce a crop when planted in between widely spaced trees. Ideal for valley areas of Eastern Province, does well in Western Province as a cash crop (Zambia Cashew Nut Company); and is tolerant of drought.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, posts, **food** (cashew apple, cashew nut), shade, soil conservation, windbreak, varnish (nutshell oil), gum.

Description: An evergreen tree about 5 m, crown rounded and shady. **BARK:** rough, dark brown. **LEAVES:** leathery, dark green and **broadly oval to 15 cm long, tip rounded, wavy**. **FLOWERS:** clusters, small and star-like, pink-cream, few becoming fruit. **FRUIT:** hard, **kidney-shaped nuts grow below a shiny orange-yellow "cashew apple"** (a swollen stalk). Nuts fall to the ground when ripe.

Propagation: Seedlings.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: 150–200.

treatment: Soak old seeds in cold water for 24 hours.

storage: Plant fresh seed. Do not store more than 9 months.

Management: Coppicing, pruning.

Remarks: The nuts have a thin skin containing a poisonous oil which must be removed by hand or by roasting. These nuts are one of the world's best edible nuts and command a good price on the world market. The cashew can suffer from an insect which attacks the shoots and from fungal diseases, but so far these problems have not been serious in Eastern Province. There are several varieties: Brazilian Dwarf is recommended since it fruits early and does not grow tall, hence it is easy to pick the fruit. This variety can be spaced 3–4 m, whereas the giant variety requires 10–12 m between the trees.

