

Annona senegalensis (*A. chrysophylla*)

Annonaceae

Indigenous

English: Wild custard apple
Kunda: Mpovya
Nyanja: Mpovya
Senga: Mkonokono, mthopa
Tumbuka: Mkonokono, mthopa

Ecology: A wild fruit tree found all over Africa from semi-arid scrub to humid, lowland woodland. It is usually seen as a shrub under taller trees; and grows throughout the Eastern Province, particularly in the valleys. It can be grown in a wide variety of soils.

Uses: **Food** (fruit), **medicine** (root, gum, fruit), fodder (leaves), dye (bark).

Description: A shrubby, deciduous tree usually 2–6 m. **BARK:** smooth and grey, later rough, thick; young branches hairy, grey-orange. **LEAVES:** **oval and rounded**, to 18 cm, hairy below; a **peculiar smell** when crushed. **FLOWERS:** 1–3 small flowers hang down below twigs, yellow-green, **parts in threes**. **FRUIT:** fleshy, rounded, to 4 cm across with overlapping “scales”, many seeds within the soft pulp.

Propagation: Seedlings, root suckers, wildings.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg 2,500–3,000.

treatment: Scarify seed with sand or soak in hot water and allow to cool for 24 hours.

storage: Seeds susceptible to insect damage and lose viability within 6 months.

Management: Coppicing, fire protection.

Remarks: The ripe fruit is orange-yellow, smells like pineapple and tastes sweet. The fruit should be picked while still green to avoid damage by birds, and then kept for ripening. Commonly used as an aphrodisiac, roots are used to treat skin rashes and leaves are used to treat snakebite. Regenerates on recently cultivated or burnt land. The leaf tips and bark are used to treat colds and pneumonia. The fruits are used for diarrhoea, dysentery and vomiting. The roots are also used for stomach problems. The bark is used to treat intestinal worms as well as dysentery and the gum is used to treat cuts.

