

Azadirachta indica

Meliaceae

North-East India, Burma

- Common names:** Eng: margosa tree; neem tree; Swah: mkilifi, mwarubaini kamili.
- Ecology:** A well-known tree in its natural range (India) and today widely planted in Africa. Pan-tropical in semi-arid and arid regions, withstanding drought. In Tanzania it has been recommended for very dry areas and poor soils, 0-1,500 m. Roots grow deep and spread over a wide area; does not stand waterlogging.
- Uses:** Fodder (leaves, oil-seed cake), bee forage, soil conservation, ornamental, shade, windbreak, insecticide (azadirachtin in leaves, etc.), oil (seeds), soap (seed oil).
- Description:** A fast-growing, medium-sized tree which may reach 20 m, with a dense, leafy, oval-shaped canopy, evergreen. **BARK:** pale grey-brown, grooved and rough at maturity. **LEAVES:** glossy green, crowded at the ends of branches, compound to 40 cm long, each leaflet curved and long pointed, the edge roughly saw toothed, leaf blades unequal, a small leaflet at the leaf tip. **FLOWERS:** small, fragrant, creamy white, hanging in long graceful sprays. **FRUIT:** oval yellow berries when ripe, 2 cm long, thin skinned with oily pulp around 1-2 seeds.
- Propagation:** Seedlings, wildings, stumps, direct sowing.
- Seed info.:** No. of seeds per kg: about 5,000.
- treatment:** not necessary; sow seed immediately after collection and extraction. Germination can be improved by nicking the seed coat at the round end.
- storage:** seed can be stored only for a very short period under field conditions. Use fresh seed for best results.
- Management:** Fast growing; lopping, pollarding.
- Remarks:** The wood is tough and resistant to decay and termites. Highly valued almost throughout Tanzania for its medicinal uses (reputed to cure 40 different diseases). It spreads easily and may become a weed in some areas.

