

*Azadirachta indica*

## Meliaceae

N.E. India, Burma

**English:** Neem

**Ecology:** A tree well known in its native India and now one of the most widely planted trees in Africa and all over the tropics, in arid and semi-arid regions. It is very drought-resistant, does well on poor soils but does not withstand waterlogging. The roots grow deep and wide. This is a suitable tree for improving degraded soils. Does best in the Valley in Eastern Province.

**Uses:** Firewood, charcoal, timber (furniture), poles, **medicine** (leaves, bark, roots), fodder (foliage, oil seed cake), bee forage, **shade**, ornamental, soil conservation and improvement, windbreaks, **insecticide** (azadirachtin), oil (seeds), soap (seed oil).

**Description:** A **fast-growing**, medium-sized tree which may reach up to 20 m high, with a dense, leafy, oval-shaped canopy, evergreen except in the driest areas. **BARK:** pale grey-brown, grooved. **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;** a smaller leaflet at the leaf tip. **FLOWERS:** small, fragrant cream-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, cuttings, direct seeding.

**Seed:** Number of seeds per kg:  $\pm 5,000$ .

**treatment:** Not necessary, sow seed immediately after collection and extraction.

**storage:** Avoid storage.

**Management:** Lopping, pollarding.

**Remarks:** Slow growing only the first year, then relatively fast. A most useful tree whose cultivation should be encouraged. It is called "mwarubaini" in East Africa, meaning it can be used as medicine for 40 different diseases (Swahili: *arubaini* = 40). Reported to be used to treat malaria, rheumatism, stomach-ache, cough, diarrhoea, etc. The wood is tough and resistant to decay and termites.

