

Azanza garckeana

Malvaceae

Indigenous

English: Tree hibiscus

Kunda: Ukole

Nyanja: Mkole

Senga: Mtowo

Tumbuka: Mtowo

Ecology: The only *Azanza* species found in Africa, from the Sudan south to South Africa, occurring in all types of woodlands, especially on termite mounds, 0–1700 m. Found in all parts of Zambia, except Western Province; only occasional in Eastern Province.

Uses: **Firewood, charcoal, timber** (tool handles, yokes), **food** (fruit), fodder (leaves), bee forage, shade, fibre (bark).

Description: A semi-deciduous shrubby tree, 3–10 m with a leafy rounded crown. **BARK:** dark brown, rough, branchlets with woolly hairs. **LEAVES:** distinctively **rounded up to 20 x 20 cm**, usually 8 x 12 cm, **on long stalks up to 13 cm, 3–5 lobes**, rough brown hairs above, soft below. **FLOWERS:** showy, yellow with a purple-brown centre appear November–March; casual flowering up to August. **FRUIT:** rounded and woody 2–8 cm wide, yellow to brown-green when mature, opens into 4–5 sections. Sweet and edible, contains 15–30 light brown woolly seeds. Ripen August–September.

Propagation: Seedlings, direct seeding, rootsuckers.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: about 4,000.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Use fresh seed to get a good germination rate. Seeds lose viability within 6 months.

Management: Coppicing.

Remarks: The tree is a host of cotton stainers, therefore should not be grown in cotton-producing areas. The fruit is chewed like chewing gum and is very popular with children. Susceptible to bush fires. The leaves can be used as green manure and mulch.

