

Bauhinia petersiana

Caesalpinioideae

Indigenous

Common names: **Eng:** white bauhinia; **Hehe:** mkomba; **Lugu:** mzunguzungu; **Mate:** mtimbi; **Mwera:** nng'ekee; **Nyam:** kiteмба, mfumbi, mnoga; **Sangu:** mhakwe, mkomba; **Suku:** mfumbi; **Swah:** mgobwali.

Ecology: Commonly found at low and medium altitudes in moso woodland types and on anthills, 150-1,800 m. Also found in Zaire, Zambia and Mozambique.

Uses: Food (seeds), medicine (roots, leaves), fodder (leaves, pods), shade, ornamental, tannin (roots).

Description: An evergreen or semi-deciduous shrub or tree to 8 m with a spreading rounded crown, branchlets with brown hairs. **BARK:** pale to dark brown, smooth, powdery when young, flaking in vertical strips when old. **LEAVES:** alternate, simple, blue-green, **divided into two lobes**, lobes 3-9 cm across, feel hairy below. **FLOWERS:** fragrant, **white, stamens pink**, petals wavy, bent back. **FRUIT:** a brown pod, smooth, to 18 cm long, 8-6 cm wide. Splitting explosively when mature, 5-8 brown-purple seeds, oily and shiny. Dry **spiral pods** remain on the tree.

Propagation: Seedlings, direct sowing.

Seed info;: No. of seeds per kg: 1,500.

treatment: soak in cold water for 12 hours.

storage: can only be stored in cold conditions.

Management: Pruning, coppicing, pollarding.

Remarks: People eat the seeds during famine. In earlier times explorers and hunters used the seeds as a substitute for coffee.

