

Bauhinia variegata

India, Tropical Asia, China

COMMON NAMES: English: Bauhinia, Camel's foot, Orchid tree, Variegated bauhinia.

DESCRIPTION: A small semi-deciduous tree, usually to 6 m but sometimes much taller. **BARK:** Grey and smooth, furrowed with age. **LEAVES:** Alternate **dull, blue-green, the 2 lobes** 10–15 cm across ('camel's foot' shape), veins radiating from the leaf base. **FLOWERS:** Pink and white, in short sprays, each flower with **5 petals, marked with rose or yellow-green, one petal different shape and colour** (orchid-like), 5 arched stamens. **FRUIT:** Flat brown pods to 20 cm long, **twisting open** to release round flat seeds 1 cm across.

ECOLOGY: A common, attractive, flowering tree occurring throughout the tropics. In Kenya, grown up to 2,200 m. A common plant along streets and avenues in towns. Agroclimatic Zones II–IV.

USES: Firewood, timber, tool handles, farm implements, vegetable (flowers), fodder (young leaves), shade, ornamental, soil conservation, resin, gum, tannin.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, direct sowing at site. Seedling growth is severely set back if roots are pruned or disturbed when planting, so direct sowing at site is the better alternative.

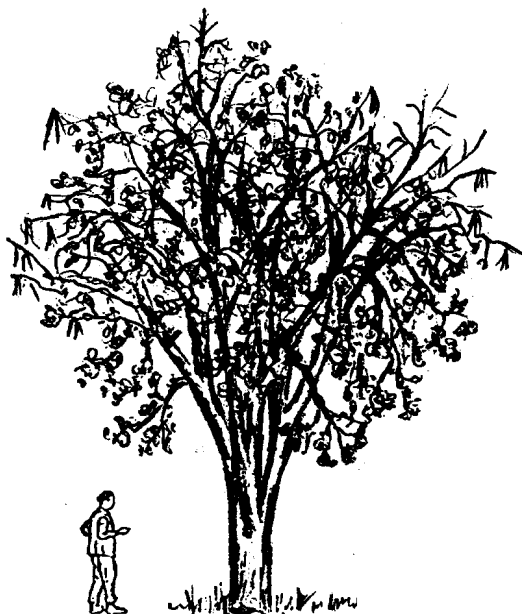
SEED: Germination rate 50–80% and fast, after about a week from fresh seed; 2,800–3,500 seeds per kg.

treatment: Not necessary, but germination may be enhanced if seed are soaked in cold water for 48 hours.

storage: Can be stored for some time, but best results from fresh seed.

MANAGEMENT: Coppicing, lopping, pollarding

REMARKS: *B. purpurea* is a medium-sized, spreading tree. Some grow in Kenya. Purple-pink flowers with overlapping strap-shaped petals, only 3 fertile stamens and winged or ridged buds. A useful tree in India: vegetable (buds, young leaves), fodder (leaves, pods), tools (heavy, hard wood). The many uses of these *Bauhinia* spp. in India have not yet been well explored in Kenya.



Fabaceae (Caesalpiaceae)

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Dharani, 2002; Katende et al., 1995; Lötschert and Beese, 1983; Mbuya et al., 1994; National Academy of Sciences, 1979; Noad and Birnie, 1989.

