

Berchemia discolor

Rhamnaceae

Indigenous

Common names: **Eng:** bird plum, wild almond; **Gogo:** mgandu; **Nyam:** mkuni; **Lugu:** nyahumbu; **Sand:** okoo; **Swah:** mnago.

Ecology: Widespread from the Sudan to South Africa, scattered, growing in semi-desert grassland, open woodland or **at** lower altitudes, along river valleys, especially on termite mounds. Common in miombo woodlands in Tanzania. 0-2,000 m.

Uses: Poles, timber (construction, furniture), food (fruit), drink (tea from leaves), medicine (roots), bee forage, fodder (fruit, leaves), shade, ornamental, windbreak, resin, black dye (heartwood, roots), whitewash (ash).

Description: A semi-deciduous shrub or tall tree to 18 m with erect spreading branches making a heavy rounded crown. **BARK:** grey-black, cracking and scaly, corky spots on young greenish branches. **LEAVES:** simple, alternate, **shiny dark green, sticky when young, oval to 11 cm, lateral nerves making a clear pattern.** **FLOWERS:** small yellow-green, stalked, in loose clusters attracting bees. **FRUIT:** date-like, **yellow, about 2 cm long** with 1-2 flat seeds in sweet edible flesh.

Propagation: Seedlings, direct sowing, root suckers.

Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: 3,000-3,500. Germination is very good and fast.

treatment: soak in cold water for 12 hours.

storage: stores well at room temperature if kept dry.

Management: Coppicing, lopping, pollarding.

Remarks: This tree produces one of the hardest woods in East and Central Africa. It has light and yellow sapwood and yellow-brown resinous heartwood. Fruit may be eaten boiled with sorghum. The black dye, prepared from powdered heartwood and roots, is used by basket makers. Whitewash for painting houses can be made from the ash.

