

# Borassus aethiopum

*Palm*

Indigenous

- Common names:** Eng: African fan palm, borassus palm; Nyam: mhama; Nyat: mfama; Nyir: mpama; Samb: vumo; Suku: muhama; Swah: mvumo.
- Ecology:** Widespread throughout the less dry areas of tropical Africa. It needs a high watertable. In Tanzania it is found along the coast and along water courses.
- Uses:** Poles, timber (roofing, door frames), tool handles, carving (drums), food (fruit, seeds, young seedlings), palm wiru (sap of flower shoots), medicine (roots, flowers, oil), fodder (fruit, young leaves), thatch, fibre (leaves), baskets, mats (leaf stalks, leaves), oil (fruit), brooms.
- Description:** A straight tall palm to 20 m with a swollen bole. TRUNK smooth grey, thickened above the middle, dead leaves remain on the young trunk, old trunks up to 80 cm across. LEAVES: large fan shaped to 4 m long by 3 m across, deeply divided into leaflets, thorny at the base. FLOWERS: male and female on different trees, male producing branched spikes up to 2 m carrying the pollen. FRLT: large, in bunches, round up to 15 cm diameter orange-brown, cupped in the enlarged calyx, fibrous oily pulp around 3 seeds, each 8 cm brown, woody.
- Propagation:** Direct sowing, seedlings.
- Seed info.:** No. of seeds per kg: 2-3. Seeds should be dried in tin shade to avoid scorching. The seed can be sown without removing the pulp surrounding it. Germination takes one month.
- treatment:** not necessary.
- storage:** seeds dried in the shade remain viable up to 6 months.
- Management:** Slow growing. Rotation period depends on site but can be 60-140 years.
- Remarks:** Elephants eat the fruits, thus distributing the tree. The wood is hard and resistant to termites and fungi. However, overlapping of the tree for its sap (palm wine) has made the tree rare. It is the tallest indigenous palm in Tanzania. The wood is hard and heavy.



fruit

