

Brachystegia longifolia

Caesalpinioideae

Indigenous

Nyanja: Mbovu, mchenga, msamba

Ecology: Occurs over most of Tanzania, southern Zaire, eastern Angola, Malawi and northern Mozambique. It is found throughout Zambia in all types of miombo woodland and some other forests; often dominant in wetter areas, 950–1,700 m. Not a very common species in Eastern Province but found in miombo woodland on the plateau.

Uses: **Firewood, charcoal, timber** (tool handles), medicine, **bee forage**, shade, bark fibre.

Description: A semi-deciduous tree to 30 m with a **straight bole**, occasionally swollen at the base, with a flat to rounded, spreading crown, sometimes in two layers. Twigs usually hairless. **BARK:** grey-black or dark brown, grooved with deep vertical fissures and squarish flakes. **LEAVES:** alternate, **pinnate, mostly 9–12 pairs, leaflets long oval, thin, leathery**, paler below, middle leaflets longer, mostly 3–5 cm, **well spaced** on a stalk **9–18 cm**. **FLOWERS:** green-white in terminal bunches about 7 cm long, September–December. Casual flowering March–June. **FRUIT:** woody, flat, **8 cm long, somewhat shiny**, reddish brown pods, one edge thickened, ripen June–September, then open explosively to scatter **2–6 flat chestnut-brown seeds** (rarely seen above the crown).

Propagation: Seedlings, wildings.

Seed: –

treatment: Soak in hot water and allow to cool for 24 hours.

storage: –

Management: Coppicing, pollarding, lopping.

Remarks: The timber is very susceptible to borers, moderately heavy and hard but not very durable. It readily absorbs preservatives. The timber is used as mine props and in temporary construction work. It is a good bee tree with heavy nectar flow between September and November.

