

Caesalpinia decapetala

Caesalpinioideae

Tropical Asia

English: Mauritius thorn

Nyanja: Chatata, jatata

Ecology: This spiny shrub was introduced to Africa from Asia because it made a useful hedge, comparable to barbed wire. It has become naturalized in many wetter parts of Africa from Kenya to South Africa, 900–2,100 m. In Zambia it is common on the plateau, often used to fence in dimba in Eastern Province. Away from farms, it invades grasslands, bushland and forest clearings but does not do well on poor soil.

Uses: Medicine, bee forage, ornamental, soil improvement, **live fence**.

Description: A shrub or climber, rarely reaching 10 m. **LEAVES:** compound, to 50 cm long with **hooked prickles below the leaf stalk**. **FLOWERS:** showy, **pale yellow**, in spikes to 30 cm, each 2 cm across with **orange stamens hanging** down. **FRUIT:** clusters of brown **pointed pods held erect on woody stalks**, scattering many seeds as they open.

Propagation: Seedlings, direct seeding.

Seed: Germination rate > 60%. Germinates within 10 days or so if treated.

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

storage: Seed can be stored for a long period if it is kept free from insects.

Management: Trim as a live fence, coppicing.

Remarks: It may become a serious weed if not checked. Burning of naturally regenerated growth in the dry season is an effective control measure. Fairly fast growing.

