

Central America

Common names: **Eng:** calliandra.

Ecology: Calliandra species have long been popular in the tropics as ornamentals due to their red flower heads. This species and one other have many uses, especially as quick-growing fuelwood. Brought very recently to Tanzania, the tree does well in a variety of soils, including acidic ones, 150-2,000 m. It can grow at higher altitudes than *Leucaena* and tolerate several months of drought, but does best with high rainfall. It does not tolerate waterlogging.

Uses: Firewood, poles, fodder (leaves, twigs), bee forage, shade, ornamental, mulch, nitrogen fixation, soil conservation, soil improvement, windbreak.

Description: A multi-stemmed shrub, 2-6 m, branches spreading to a dense canopy with maximum stem diameter 20 cm. Leaves may be shed in a long dry season. BARK: grey-brown, smooth. LEAVES: compound, feathery, 5-15 pinnae with **numerous tiny leaflets, very narrow and pointed**. Leaves **fold up easily** and at night. The stiff stalk is shiny purple with **swellings at the base of each leaf and each pinna**. FLOWERS: in terminal heads with **dense clusters of rounded green-red buds** beside the alternate leaves. The showy flowers have **red "brushes" of long shiny stamens**. FRUIT: a **pod** about 10 cm long which breaks open, each half **curling back** to set free up to 15 seeds.

**Propagation:** Seedlings.,

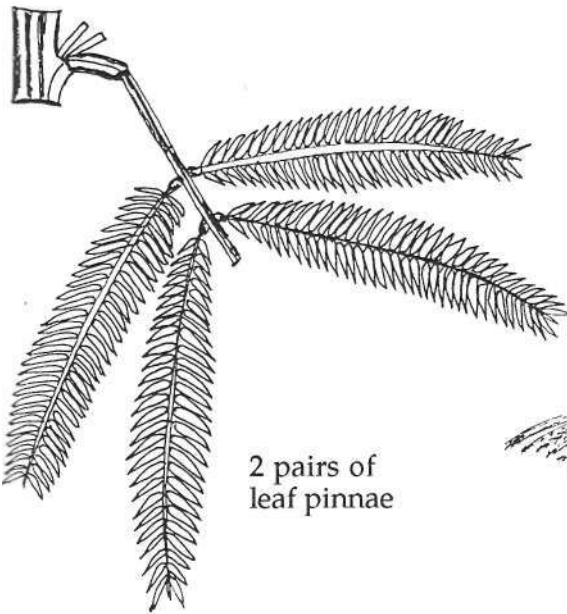
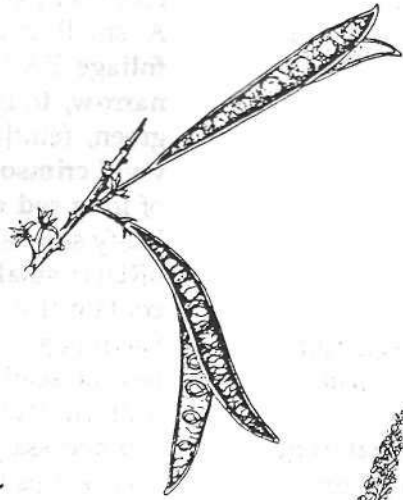
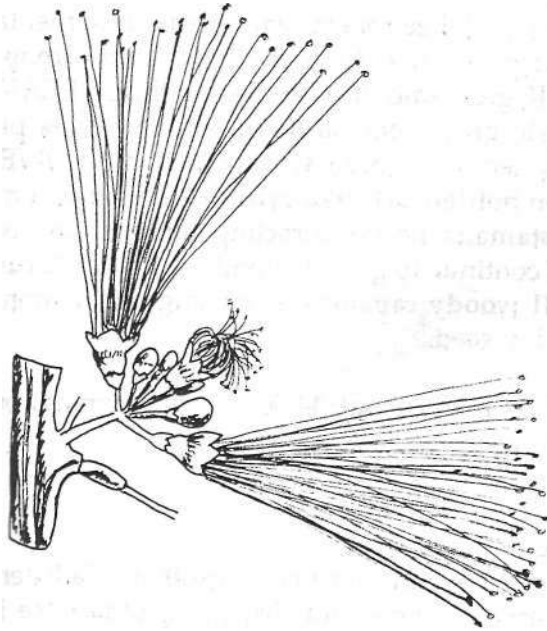
**Seed info.:** No. of seeds per kg: about 19,000.

**treatment:** immerse in hot water, allow to cool and soak for 12-24 hours, or soak in cold water for 24 hours,

**storage:** seed stores well for 1-2 years.

**Management:** Very fast growing on good sites; lopping, coppicing. Vigour declines with age and it only lasts for about 12 years.

**Remarks:** Beetles attack the flowers and hence reduce seed production. A high tannin content reduces its palatability as fodder but the foliage contains 22% protein. The wood is dense and burns well but is often attacked by ants. The tree can be used as a pioneer on poor soils. Woody stems can be harvested from 3-5 cm diameter. Useful for reforestation as it can be planted beneath stands of taller trees. This tree can improve soils significantly when dug in and thus reduce the need for artificial fertilizer.



2 pairs of leaf pinnae

