

# Carapa procera (C. grandiflora)

Meliaceae

Indigenous

**Trade name:** Crab nut, Uganda crab wood, Uganda crab nut.

**Common names:** **Rukiga:** Muruguya **Runyankore:** Mutongana **Rutoro:** Muhungulia, mujogo.

**Ecology:** A distinctive but very variable tree of the rain-forest belt of West and Central Africa from Senegal to Angola and East Africa; also in tropical America. In Uganda it occurs in medium-altitude forests, along rivers and at low altitude in Sango Bay of Lake Victoria; also in north Kabale, Kalinzu, Kayonza and north Bwindi Forests, but rare in Mengo and Mubende Districts.

**Uses:** Firewood, charcoal, timber (carpentry, furniture, panelling), veneer, food (fat in seeds), ornamental.

**Description:** An evergreen understorey tree up to 25 m, usually smaller, **branches crooked, widespreading and arching**, the crown spreading and dense. Branches arise low down on the trunk which is often fluted. **BARK:** thin, smooth, grey-brown to black. When cut a **gummy resin** exudes, **tasting bitter like quinine**. **LEAVES:** very large and crowded at the ends of thick branchlets. **Young leaves bright red then orange, slowly turning dark green**. Pinnate leaves usually **6-9 pairs** leaflets on a stalk to **1.5 cm**, **each leaflet long oblong about 25 cm x 9 cm** (to 40 cm), tip rounded ending abruptly in a point, about **10 side veins well spaced**. **FLOWERS:** A **much-branched head like a pyramid to 70 cm or more**, each flower with **5 yellow-pink-white petals** about 1 cm long, with a central stamen tube. **FRUIT:** A large **round woody capsule 12-15 cm across**, sometimes beaked. The fruit cracks open into 5 parts when it falls to the ground to set free **12-20 angular seeds, each 3 cm, shiny dark brown, pitted**.

**Propagation:** Seedlings (sow seed in pots) and wildings.

**Seed:** The large seeds remain in the fruit until it falls to the ground. They germinate readily under favourable conditions,

**treatment:** soak in water overnight before sowing.

**storage:** very susceptible to weevil attack. Plant within 2 months. Store in a cool place and add ash to reduce insect damage.

**Management:** Initial care and shading are required until established. Pruning is necessary to obtain a clear bole. Slow growing.

**Remarks:** Plant as a pure stand, as an ornamental or intercropped in banana, coffee, cocoa and tea plantations. Recommended for Sango Bay, Bushenyi, Kabale, Rukungiri and Fort Portal areas. The wood is considered similar to crabwood (*Andiroba* sp.) from the West Indies. Seeds are used to manufacture a type of butter in south-western Uganda (Kigezi). The timber is reddish brown **with** a golden lustre. In West Africa the bark is used as a medicine and "crab oil" from the seeds as insecticide and soap.

