

Cassia abbreviata

Caesalpinioideae

Indigenous

English: Long-pod cassia
Kunda: Mleza
Nyanja: Mkhoswe, mleza, mnyoka
Senga: Mwanamayoka

Ecology: A small tree widespread in dry thornbush and woodlands from Somalia to South Africa, 220–1,520 m. There are two main subspecies. In Eastern Province, it is common on termite mounds in open woodlands and deciduous thicket. Easily recognized as the long pods hang on the tree for some time.

Uses: Firewood, timber (furniture, joinery), **medicine** (bark, roots).

Description: A deciduous shrub or well-branched tree up to 10 m with a light, open flat-to-rounded crown growing up to 10 m high (may reach 15 metres). **BARK:** rough, grey-brown, cracked. **LEAVES:** compound on a leaf stalk to 25 cm, up to **12 pairs stalked leaflets**, each one thin and oblong to 6 cm, **tip rounded or notched**. **FLOWERS:** **golden yellow** heads to 9 cm, fragrant, 5 petals to 3 cm. Flowers are seen on the bare tree in the dry season, March–November. **FRUIT:** dark brown **Pods, 30–90 cm**, thick cylindrical section containing many seeds in pulp. Pods ripen June–July of the following year and seeds are shaken out.

Propagation: Seedlings, wildings.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: 15,000. Germination is good and fast with fresh seed.

treatment: Not necessary for fresh seeds. Soak stored seed in cold water for 24 hours.

storage: Can be stored for a long time if kept dry and free of insects.

Management: Pruning.

Remarks: A good medicinal tree for many ailments, e.g. sexually transmitted diseases and stomach-ache.

