

Ceiba pentandra

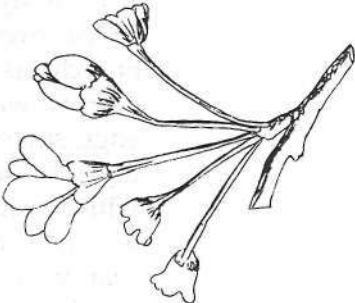
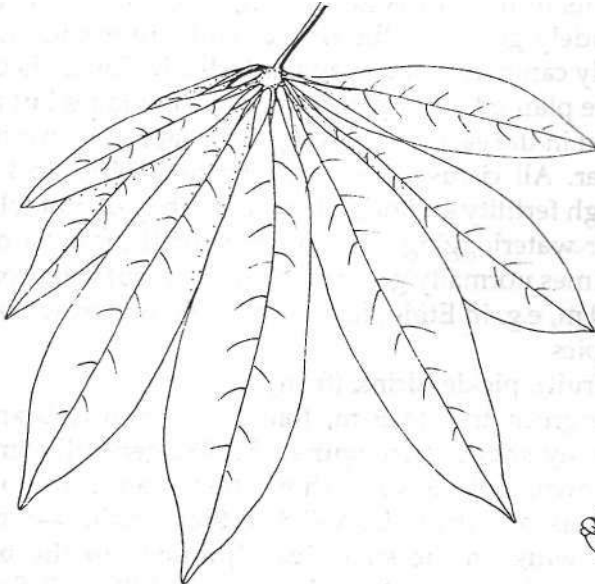
Bombacaceae

South and Central America

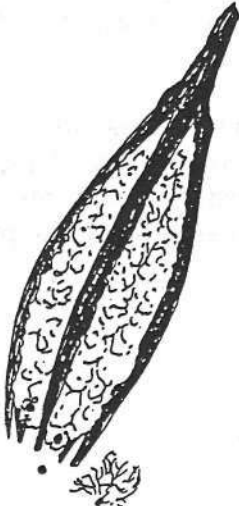
- Common names: **Eng:** kapok tree; Mwera: msufi; **Swah:** msufi.
- Ecology: A distinctive tree, widely found in the tropics. An important crop, e.g. in Malaysia and Sri Lanka where unripe fruit and seed oil are used as food. In Tanzania 1 is planted at the coast and near the coast (Mombo and Korogwe).
- Uses: Fodder (1^{eaves}/ shoots), medicine, ornamental, **fibre** stuffing.
- Description: A tall deciduous tree up to 30 m with **conspicuous horizontally layered branches**, the trunk covered with sharp conical spines when young, **heavily buttressed wth** age. BARK: young branches green, old bark grey, smooth. LEAVES: compound, **5-15** leaflets radiating from a **long** stalk, to 20 cm, each leaflet long and narrow, 8-16 cm. FLOWERS: small to 3 cm across, pink-white in clusters, 5 petals, silky hairy outside, pollinated by bats when **then** open in the evening. FRUIT: large woody **capsules** to 30 cm, conspicuous on the bare tree; contain rounded **black** seeds with **long silky white fibres** ("kapok").
- Propagation: Seedlings, cuttings.
- Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: 10,000-45,000. Germination rate a 50-85%.
- treatment: soak seed in cold water for 24 hours.
- storage: can retain viability up to one year at room temperature.
- Management: Coppicing, lopping, pollarding.
- Remarks: Kapok fibre burns easily but is water repellent and lighter **than cotton. The wood is so soft it has few uses. The tree is very shallow rooted and easily damaged by high winds** **Kapok IS little USed nowadays Since plastic foam is used for most stuffing and mattresses,**

Ceiba pentandra

Bombacaceae



A. Birnie



fruit capsule & seed

