

***Ceiba speciosa* (*Chorisia speciosa*)**

Bombacaceae

Brazil**COMMON NAMES:** English: Bombax, Chorisia.

DESCRIPTION: A huge deciduous tree with a swollen trunk and spiny bark, growing to 25 m, with a rounded crown and often flowering when leafless. **BARK:** Grey and smooth. **Spiny bosses present on younger branches**, becoming fewer with age. **LEAVES:** **Digitately compound**, 5–7 leaflets radiating from a 15-cm-long stalk, edge of leaflets toothed. **FLOWERS:** **Large, with 5 mauve-pink petals** with yellowish white edges and a central column of joined stamens. **FRUIT:** A woody oval capsule about 15 cm long, smooth brown, splitting open on the tree. Seeds many, embedded in masses of white kapok.

ECOLOGY: Grown in many tropical areas outside its origin. In Kenya, widely planted from the coast to 2,000 m. Common in Nairobi. Thrives in red soil but will grow also in black-cotton soil provided there is good drainage. Plant away from buildings since the root system is extensive and the litter fall is rich. Agroclimatic Zones I–III. Flowers in March in Nairobi.

USES: Ornamental, shade, fibre (kapok).

PROPAGATION: Seedlings.

MANAGEMENT: Fast growing.

FURTHER READING: Dharani, 2002; Löttschert and Beese, 1983; Noad and Birnie, 1989.

