

Croton macrostachyus

Euphorbiaceae

Indigenous

Am: *Bisana*

Eng: *Broad-leaved croton*

Gmz: *Beroha*

Gr: *Bekenissa, Mekenissa*

Or: *Ankowa, Bakanissa, Bakano, Dogoma, Makanissa*

Sh: *Beroha*

Sm: *Masincho, Wush*

Tg: *Islami, Tambush*

Ecology

Found more or less throughout tropical Africa from Guinea eastwards to Ethiopia and south to Angola, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. Widespread on forest margins, along roadsides, and in *Juniperus-Podocarpus* habitats. It grows mostly in soils of volcanic origin in Dry, Moist and Wet Weyna Dega, and Dega, as well as in upper altitudes of Dry Kolla agroclimatic zones in all regions, 1,100–2,500 m.

Uses

Firewood, charcoal, timber, poles, tool handles, medicine (sap, leaves, roots, bark), fodder (young leaves), bee forage, mulch, soil conservation.

Description

A deciduous tree, crown rounded, light and open with slender trunk and spreading branches, reaching 25 m. BARK: Pale grey, fairly smooth when young and longitudinally fissured when old. LEAVES: Large and heart-shaped, to 15 x 10 cm, crowded at the end of branchlets on long stalks to 10 cm, veins prominent, and 2-stalked glands just visible at the leaf base. Leaf edge with a few widely spaced teeth,

paler below due to soft hairs. FLOWERS: Creamy yellow, sweet scented in erect spikes to 25 cm, all over the tree. Flowers appear only briefly, the flower spike turning down as fruits mature. FRUIT: Pea-sized capsules on drooping spikes to 30 cm, split open to release 3 shiny grey seeds with a cream aril.



Propagation

Seedlings, wildings.

Seed

16,000–27,000 seed per kg. Seeds usually damaged by insects while on the tree. Damaged seeds are black inside. Before collecting, check that inside of seeds are white-cream coloured. Collect the fruit and sun-dry to get seeds released.

Treatment: Not necessary; check that the inside is white-cream coloured.

Storage: Seeds store for a short period only since they are oily.

Management

Fairly fast growing on good sites, slow on drier sites. Lopping, pollarding, coppicing.

Remarks

Seed and resin are poisonous. When cut for firewood it has an unpleasant spicy odour and is not always popular for that purpose. It is a good tree for inter-cropping. The fruit and decoctions of the roots are used as a medicine for venereal diseases. Pulverized bark together with dried *Hagenia* flowers is an effective purgative. The soft lightwood is very perishable; not a good timber tree.



Photo: Patrick Maundu



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