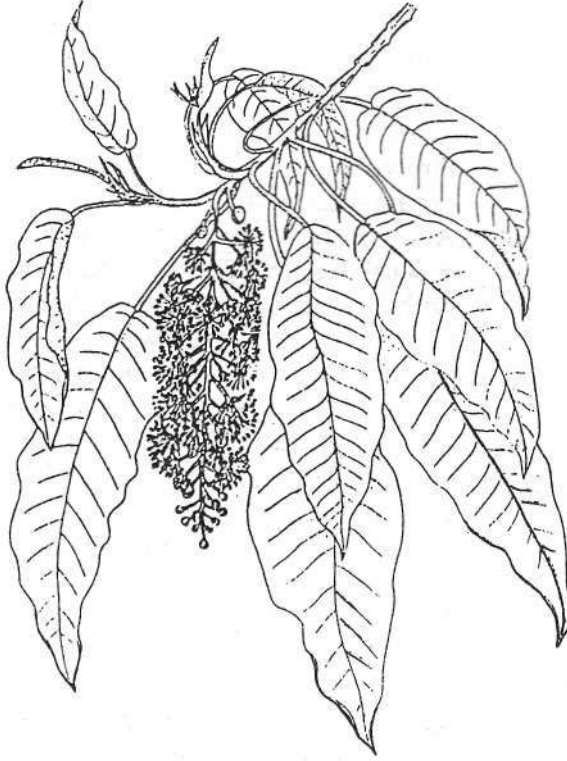


Croton megalocarpus

Euphorbiaceae

Indigenous

- Common names:** Chag: mbali, lali, mlalai, lalei, mlandee, mnyaki, mwajaji; Eng: croton; Goro: meali; Haya: muhihi; Iraqw: zilo; Maasai: ol mergoit, ol margait, ol marbait, olmarubai; Meru: marabai; Pare: muhande.
- Ecology:** A dominant upper-storey tree in some forested areas of East Africa, widespread in the mountain areas of Kilimanjaro, Meru, Ngorongoro, and Usambara. It can be found in a range of semi-humid habitats, 1,200-2,400 m, but has been planted at lower altitudes.
- Uses:** Firewood, charcoal, timber, poles, medicine (bark), bee forage, shade, ornamental, mulch, live fence, boundary marker.
- Description:** A spreading deciduous tree to 35 m with distinctive layering of branches, the crown rather flat and giving light shade. **BARK:** dark grey, rough, cracking. **LEAVES:** variable, long oval and pointed to 12 cm but often much smaller, stalked. The dull green upper surface contrasts with the pale, silvery underside. **FLOWERS:** very short lived but conspicuous, the buds opening after heavy rains into pale yellow, hanging spikes to 25 cm, with only a few female flowers at the base. **FRUIT:** very many grey woody capsules, about 2.5 cm long with three flattened seeds inside, grey-brown when mature with a small bump.
- Propagation:** Direct sowing (recommended), seedlings, wildings.
- Seed info.:** No. of seeds per kg: about 1,000. The tree seeds prolifically. Extract seed by cracking fruit shell and sun dry firm mature seed. Germination is good: up to 70% after 30 days.
- treatment:** not necessary.
- storage:** seed cannot be stored for long periods due to the high oil content (at best 50% viability after 6 months).
- Management:** Fast growing in high-potential areas, slow elsewhere lopping, pollarding, coppicing.
- Remarks:** The seed has high oil content (30%) and high protein content (50%). The oil extract can be a strong purgative. Not recommended for intercropping due to competition with crops. There are cultural beliefs against planting this tree close to houses. Smoke from the firewood can irritate the eyes.



three seeds

