

Croton megalocarpus

Euphorbiaceae

Indigenous

Common names: **English:** Croton **Luganda:** Nkulumire **Luganda, dialect Buddu:** Mbula **Rukiga:** Mutakura, muyuni **Runyankore:** Mutugunda **Rutoro:** Munyabakuru, mwenyabakikuru.

Ecology: A dominant upper-storey tree in some evergreen or semi-deciduous forested areas of East Africa. Widespread in most forests, particularly in Kibale and the Impenetrable (Bwindi) Forests and in some Toro forests, but uncommon in Bunyoro. 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 (the caruncle).

Propagation: Direct sowing on site (recommended), seedlings (sow seed in pots), wildings.

Seed: 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.

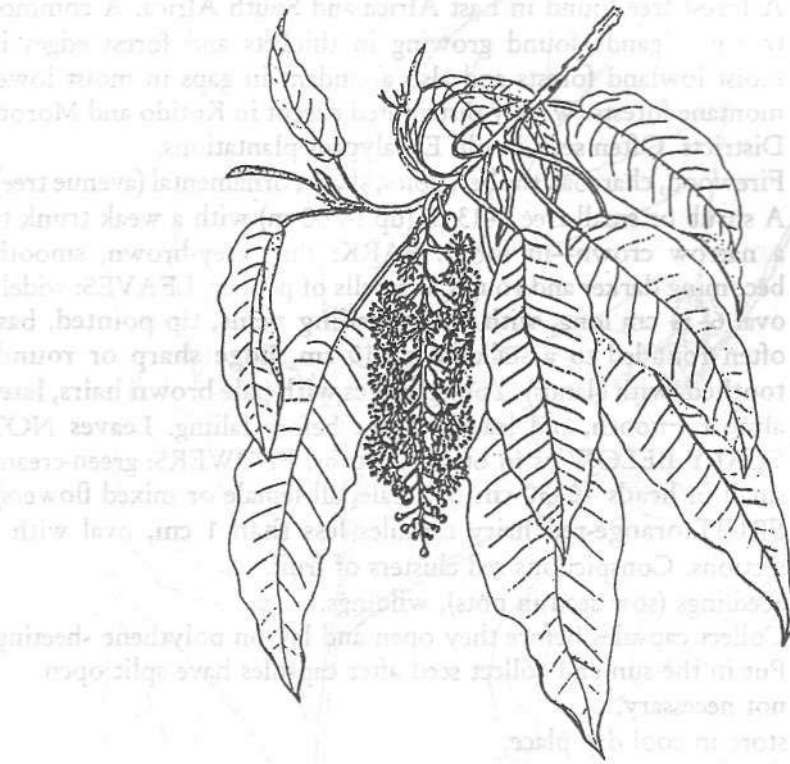
storage: seed cannot be stored for long periods due to the high oil content (at best 50% viability after 6 months).

Management: Fast growing in high-potential areas, slow elsewhere; lopping, pollarding, coppicing.

Remarks: The seed has a high oil content (30%) and a high protein content (50%). The oil extract can be a strong purgative. The heavy timber is not durable and the heartwood has a very bad smell. The sap also has a spicy odour.

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three seeds

