

Cussonia kirkii (*Cussonia arboroea*)

Araliaceae

Indigenous

English: Cabbage tree, dead man's fingers
Nyanja: Mbwabwa, mpandanjovu, chipombo
Senga: Chipombola

Ecology: The commonest member of this family in Zambia. All have very soft wood and the leafy heads are a characteristic shape. They grow at forest edges of miombo woodland, widely distributed.

Uses: **Timber** (utensils, traditional musical instruments), medicine (bark, roots).

Description: A small deciduous tree about 10 m high with a **short bole**; the crown somewhat rounded. **BARK:** grey-brown, deeply grooved, thick and corky. **LEAVES:** compound, 7–9 leaflets, **each one toothed**, almost stalkless. The tree is bare between June and October and new leaves appear with the flowers. Leaves are crowded at the end of branches in very **large rounded clusters** ("cabbage-like"). **FLOWERS:** small and green, on long thin spikes, October–December. **FRUIT:** shiny, purple-black, rounded, **clustered along the spikes**, January–March.

Propagation: Strikes readily from cuttings.

Seed: Propagated by cuttings.

treatment: –

storage: –

Management: Coppicing, pollarding.

Remarks: The tree is a host to edible caterpillars. Burning wood gives off an unpleasant smell, therefore it is not commonly used for firewood.

