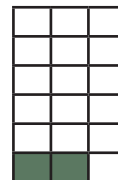


Dalbergia melanoxylon

Fabaceae



Indigenous

Am: *Zobbi*

Eng: *African blackwood, African ebony*

Or: *Moghano*

Ecology

A small tree native to tropical Africa and India. Widely spread from northern Ethiopia, south to Angola and the northern part of South Africa and west to Senegal. The tree prefers areas with a high water table. In Ethiopia, found in lower Dry Kolla agroclimatic zones associated with *Entada abyssinica* and *Combretum* spp. and also in Moist and Wet Kolla and Weyna Dega zones of Tigray and Gonder, 600–1,900 m in Ethiopia but to the coast in East Africa.

Uses

Firewood, timber (construction), carving, walking sticks, medicine (decoctions from bark and from roots, boiled leaves), fodder (fruit, leaves), bee forage, nitrogen fixation.

Description

A spiny shrub or tree much branched from the base, 5–12 m, the bole diameter no more than 20–30 cm, often twisted. Branchlets, grey-white some becoming thorns and bearing the leaves. **BARK:** Smooth, pale grey becoming rough, flaky and darker with age. **LEAVES:** Compound, on stalks to 20 cm long, leaflets 9–13, each leaflet small, 1–2 cm, the tip rounded or notched. **FLOWERS:** Very small and white in sweet-scented branched sprays, to 12 cm long. **FRUIT:** Bunches of thin flat pods, 3 to 7 cm long, papery and pointed both ends with 1–2 seeds inside.

Propagation

Seedlings, wildings, cuttings.

Seed

Pods left on the tree are soon attacked by insects, so collection of ripe grey pods should be done quickly. With pods, 6,000–16,000 seeds per kg; about 42,000 clean seeds extracted from pods. Good germination rates: 50–60% in 8–20 days. Water sparingly so seed does not rot.

Treatment: Break pods into short pieces, each with one seed, soak in cold water for 6 hours and then sow. Complete extraction of seed from the pod is difficult, but if done, there is no need for soaking.

Storage: Seed will store well if kept free from insects.

Management

Slow growing. Coppices and produces root suckers. Side prune to get a clear bole.

Remarks

The very hard, durable, termite-resistant, purple-black heartwood is very valuable for special uses such as musical instruments and carvings.



Photo: Patrick Maundu



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