

Dalbergia melanoxylon

Papilionoidem

Indigenous

Common names: **Chag:** kidamo, kinti; **Eng:** African blackwood; Lugu mbingo, mpingo; **Mwera:** mpingo; **Nguu:** mbingo; **Nyam:** mgembe; **Pare:** mwingo; **Rangi:** nyamfunza; **Suku:** mgembe, ngembe; **Swah:** mpingo; **Zigua:** mbingo; Zinza: mgembya.

Ecology: A small tree native to tropical Africa and India. **Widely** spread from northern Ethiopia, south to Angola and the Transvaal and west to Senegal. In Tanzania, found in low-altitude savannah or woodland, 0-1,300 m, around Morogoro, Itigi, and to the coast. The tree is **drought** resistant and at the coast produces seed in September-December.

Uses: Firewood, timber (construction), carving (musical instruments, walking sticks, etc.), medicine, (bark, **roots**, leaves), fodder, bee forage, mulch, nitrogen fixation.

Description: A much-branched **spiny shrub or well-branched tree, to 7** m. Diameter no more than 20-30 cm, often **twisted**. **Grey-white** spine-tipped branchlets bear the leaves. **BARK:** light grey and smooth when young, rough and flaking **with** age. **LEAVES:** compound on stalks to 20 cm, **leaflets 9-13**, each **1-2 cm, tip rounded or notched**. **FLOWERS:** **small** white, sweet-scented, in branched sprays to 12 cm long **FRUIT:** bunches of grey pods, **thin and flat to 7 cm, pointed both ends**, 1-2 papery seeds inside.

Propagation: Seedlings, wildings, cuttings, root suckers.

Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: 6,000-16,000. Germination 50-60% in 8-20 days. Water sparingly so the seed does not rot. No. of clean seeds extracted from pods is about 42,000 per kg.

treatment: break pods into short pieces, each with one seed, soak in water for 6 hours and then sow the short piece. Seeds can only be extracted from the pods with difficulty—if this is done no treatment is required.

storage: seed will store well in a cool, dry place free from insects

Management: Slow growing. Side-prune to get clear bole. Coppicing.

Remarks: The very hard, durable, termite-resistant, purple-black heartwood is used for carvings and is especially valued by the Makonde people. The wood is so hard it blunts **tools** Pieces of high-quality heartwood are exported to Europe to make valuable musical instruments. The ripe grey pods on the tree are soon attacked by insects so collect quickly.

