

Indigenous

**Trade names:** African blackwood, poyi.

**Common names:** **English:** African blackwood, African ebony **Luganda:** Motangu **Luo A:** Opo **Madi:** Poyi **Runyoro:** Mufunjo.

**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 Uganda, found in low-altitude savannah or woodland, 600-1,300 m, in Western Rift Valley and North Eastern Region. The tree is drought resistant and produces seed in September-December.

**Uses:** Firewood, charcoal, 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 seeds inside.

**Propagation:** Seedlings, wildings, cuttings, root suckers.

**Seed:** No. of seeds (with pods) 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 seed as extraction is difficult. If seeds are extracted from the pods, no treatment required. Pods left on the tree are soon attacked by insects so collection of ripe grey pods should be done quickly.

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

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

**Remarks:** Farmers should be encouraged to grow this tree as a long-term investment. The very hard, durable, termite-resistant, purple-black heartwood is used for carvings. The hard wood blunts tools so it cannot be used for furniture. Pieces of high-quality heartwood are exported from Tanzania to Europe to make valuable musical instruments.

