

Dichrostachys cinerea

Fabaceae



Indigenous

Am: *Ader, Ergett-dimmo*

Sm: *Dhigdar, Galool-sur*

Or: *Adesa, Hatte, Jirme, Worsamesa*

Tg: *Gonnok*

Ecology

A species widely distributed in tropical Africa with numerous subspecies. In Ethiopia it is found in a variety of habitats: open grassland, river banks, rocky hillsides, coastal plains, often in Dry and Moist Kolla agroclimatic zones of nearly all regions, 400-2,000 m.

Uses

Firewood, charcoal, poles, posts, tool handles, medicine (leaves, roots), fodder (leaves, pods), bee forage, nitrogen fixation, soil conservation, fibre (bark), live fence, fencing material (cut branches).

Description

A small shrubby tree, although it can reach 6 m. The feathery leaves show it is close to the genus *Acacia*. BARK: Grey, thick and fibrous. Thorns short and single, alternate and slightly hooked. LEAVES: Compound, leaflets narrow, slightly hairy, to 1 cm. FLOWERS: In two-coloured heads, upper half pink, lower half yellow. They hang on a thin stalk 2–5 cm long. FRUIT: Brown to black, twisted cluster of thin flattened pods. Each spiral pod contains 4 seeds. The pods fall to the ground and rot to set free the seed.

Propagation

Seedlings, wildings, direct sowing at site.

Seed

The tree seeds prolifically when in open land.

Treatment: Immerse seed in hot water, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours.

Storage: Can be stored for several years at room temperature if kept dry and free from insects. Add ash to reduce insect damage.

Management

Coppicing, lopping and pollarding. Produces root suckers.

Remarks

The tree can be an aggressive weed, has vigorous root suckers and can form a dense thicket. The timber is very heavy and hard, but of small dimensions. This species probably has the most beautiful flower in the family but its use as an ornamental is limited because of its thorns.



Photo: Patrick Maundu

