

*Dicrostachys cinerea*

## Mimosoideae

Indigenous

**Nyanja:** Kalumphangala

**Senga:** Lumphangala

**Ecology:** A thorny bush widespread all over Africa and beyond to India and Australia. It is very common throughout Zambia on all types of soil from open grassland to river banks, rocky hillsides and munga woodlands 0–2,000 m. Growing in low thicket, it is an indicator of overgrazing and poor soils.

**Uses:** **Firewood**, charcoal, timber (tool handles), poles, medicine (leaves, roots), **fodder** (leaves, pods), bee forage, **nitrogen fixation**, soil conservation, **fibres** (bark), basketry (debarked roots), **live fence**.

**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. The **thorns** are short and **single, alternate** and slightly hooked. **LEAVES:** compound, leaflets narrow, slightly hairy. **FLOWERS:** in two-coloured heads; upper half pink, lower half yellow. These hang on a thin stalk and so they have been called “Chinese lanterns”; October–December. **FRUIT:** A twisted cluster of thin, flattened pods. Each spiral pod contains about 4 seeds. Clusters fall to the ground and rot; May–September.

**Propagation:** Seedlings, direct seeding, rootsuckers.

**Seed:** The tree seeds prolifically when in open land. No. of seeds per kg: 39,000.

**treatment:** Immerse seed in hot water and allow to cool for 24 hours.

**storage:** Can be stored up to 10 years at room temperature if kept dry and free from insects.

**Management:** Coppicing, lopping and pollarding.

**Remarks:** It has vigorous root suckers and can form a dense thicket. The timber is very heavy and hard but of small dimensions. The pods are very rich in protein and should therefore be given as supplementary feed to oxen. The bark is used to treat dysentery, toothache and elephantiasis. The leaves are a laxative and used to treat gonorrhoea and boils. They are also a remedy for stomach problems, snakebite and scorpion stings. It is also used as an aphrodisiac.

