

Diospyros mespiliformis

Ebenaceae

Indigenous

Common names: **Ateso:** Ekum **English:** African ebony **Luo A:** Chumu **Luo J:** Chumo.

Ecology: An evergreen tree of medium to low altitudes found in West, East and Southern Africa in woodland, savannah and on rocky hillsides. In Uganda it is found in North Western, Northern and North Eastern Regions, often on termite mounds.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, timber (construction, furniture), carving (walking sticks), food (fruit: dry, fresh, fermented drink), medicine (bark, roots, fruit), bee forage, shade, ornamental.

Description: A medium to large tree, to 25 m. There may be a tall clear bole from a buttressed base to the dense rounded crown. Young parts have silvery hairs. **BARK: grey-black, rough and squared, grooved.** **LEAVES: shiny dark green**, alternate, to 14 x 3 cm, **the midrib raised below, edge wavy, tip rounded.** **FLOWERS:** fragrant, male clustered, female solitary, cream-white petals, 1 cm. **FRUIT: rounded to 2.5 cm in a calyx cup, the five segments curling back**, fruit yellow, later purple, pulp soft and sweet with 4-6 brown, hairy seeds.

Propagation: Seedlings (sow seed in pots), wildings.

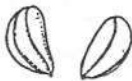
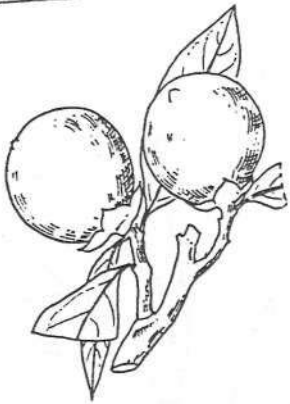
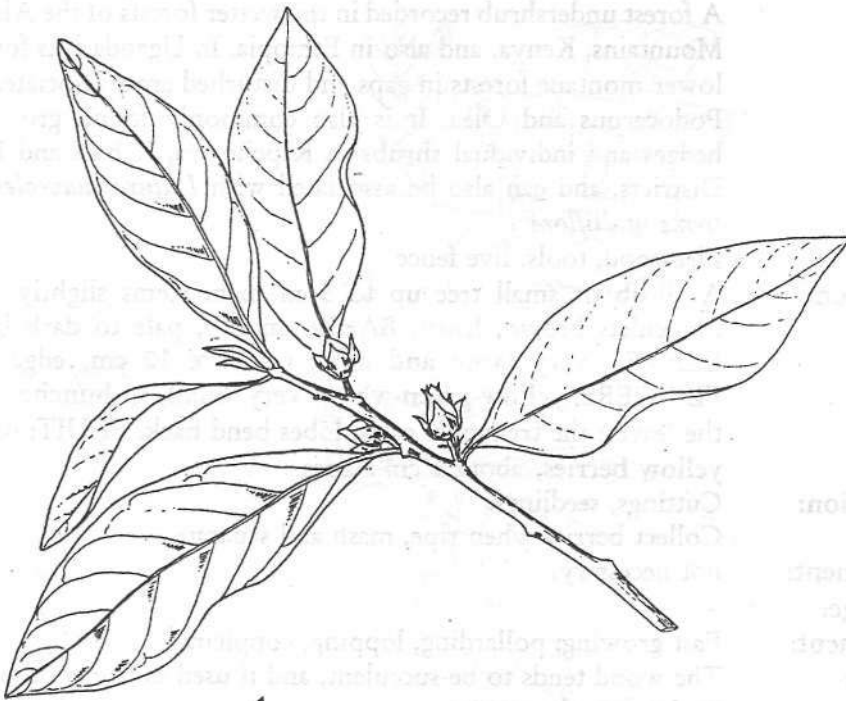
Seed: No. of seeds per kg: 2,700-3,200. Good germination.

treatment: not necessary.

storage: seed can be stored for very long periods.

Management: Slow growing.

Remarks: Diospyros species produce the valuable black heartwood—ebony. Only a few trees yield the black wood after felling; pale at first, the timber gradually becomes dark brown. The wood is hard and strong with a fine grain and is fungus and termite resistant.



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