

South Africa

**Common names:** **English:** Kei apple.

**Ecology:** A spiny shrub found in open bush and Acacia woodlands in southern Africa, now widely planted in tropical and subtropical areas as an effective fruiting fence. It does well above 1,200 m. Prefers deep well-drained soils, tolerates loamy clay and is drought resistant once established. In Uganda it is widely planted as a live fence.

**Uses:** Fruit (jam), ornamental, bee forage, live fence.

**Description:** A thorny evergreen shrub, usually 3-5 m. **BARK:** with **strong spines to 6 cm**. **LEAVES:** thin, **shiny dark green to 5 cm, tip is rounded or notched**. **FLOWERS:** male and female flowers on different plants, male flowers **cream yellow in dense clusters, many stamens**. **FRUIT:** **round, orange-yellow**, to 4 cm, soft sweet flesh, up to 20 seeds within.

**Propagation:** Seedlings (sow seed in pots), direct sowing on site.

**Seed:** No. of seeds per kg: 27,000-47,000; 50 kg of fruit yield 1 kg of seed.

**treatment:** not necessary.

**storage:** seed does not store. Sow fresh seed for best germination results. Germination in 18-20 days.

**Management:** Fast growing once established, initially slow. Initial tending necessary since it is a slow starter. Trim regularly to maintain a good live fence.

**Remarks:** In Central, Eastern and Western Uganda there has been a greatly increased demand for kei apple as hedging material in place of *Cupressus lusitanica* which has been damaged by aphids. If the fruit is soaked in water and allowed to ferment the liquid drained off has herbicidal properties (i.e. it can be used as a weed killer).

