

# Dracaena fragrans

## Dracaenaceae

Indigenous

**Common names:** **English:** Dragon tree **Luganda:** Mpaanyi, mulamula **Runyoro:** Mulamula **Rutoro:** Muramura.

**Ecology:** This is one of several East African species in a monocotyledon family, unusual in having secondary thickening in the stems and with leaves growing spirally from the stem. It is abundant as an understory shrub of wet, lower-altitude tropical rain forest. Common throughout south Mengo, often forming a dense thicket that excludes other shrubs. In Uganda it has also been cultivated over a long period and planted by tombs and shrines and as a traditional boundary marker or hedge.

**Uses:** Ornamental, hedge, boundary marking.

**Description:** An evergreen shrub or tree, usually 3-5 m (15-18 m). Vertical leafy stems grow from a tangled mass of horizontal woody stems at ground level. **BARK:** smooth, pale, ringed by leaf scars, soft and juicy if cut. **LEAVES:** usually 30-50 cm long, **4-10 cm wide**, base narrow and surrounding the stem, tip pointed, leathery, arranged spirally and **not markedly clustered at ends of branches** (as *D. steudneri*). **FLOWERS:** **flower stalk erect**, usually 18-25 cm (40-100 cm), mostly unbranched, **flowers in dense clusters, very fragrant, petals white or pink with a central darker pink stripe**, anthers yellow, flower tubular with 6 lobes in 2 whorls. **FRUIT:** rounded **orange fleshy berries**, about 2 cm, sometimes lobed, on thick stalks.

**Propagation:** Wildings, cuttings.

**Seed:** Fruit can be collected then crushed to set free the seeds. The seeds are then gradually dried.

**treatment:** not necessary.

**storage:** store in a dry cool place.

**Management:** The plant is managed from cuttings or wildings as a boundary marker or as a hedge. Fast growing.

**Remarks:** There is a good market in Dracaena cuttings being exported to Germany where they are potted and sold as indoor plants. Some African Dracaena have valuable resins which are extracted for sale. Roots are reported to have medicinal uses.

