

Dracaena usambarensis

Dracaenaceae

Indigenous

- Common names:** Chag: isare; Bond: kiteguzi; Eng: long-leaved dragon tree; Haya: mulamula, mutendere; Iraqw: sansuli; Pare: isae; Samb: ng'weng'we.
- Ecology:** Scattered in high-rainfall areas in forest edges and swamp forest in Tanzania from sea level to about 1,830 m. Also found in wet forests on the Kenya coast and in Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia.
- Uses:** Fodder (leaves), medicine (roots), grave or boundary marker, ornamental.
- Description:** A palm-like tree to 15 m high with compact crown, often multi-stemmed. **BARK:** grey or whitish, smooth, marked with leaf scars. **LEAVES:** narrow, elongated, spear shaped, 15-26 cm long, 2-5 cm wide, leathery and shiny dark green, largely arranged towards the end of branchlets. **FLOWERS:** greenish white in loose branched flowering spikes, up to 25 cm long, sweet scented, open at night, petal lobes as long as the tube of the flower. **FRUIT:** red-brown fleshy berries, up to 2 cm diameter, containing 1-3; seeds. Fruit stalks bright orange.
- Propagation:** Seedlings and cuttings.
- Seed info.:** No. of seeds per kg: 4,500-5,000. Germination is very good and fast.
- treatment:** no treatment required.
- storage:** the seed is perishable, so avoid storage.
- Management:** A fast-growing plant and coppices very well.
- Remarks:** In the Usambara mountains, the tree is found in thid forests and on farmlands with coffee, bananas, sugarcane etc. Foliage is cut as fodder for cattle in the dry season. Root extracts have been used to treat stomach ache.

