

***Entada abyssinica*****Fabaceae (Mimosaceae)****Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Luhya:** Musembe; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumusembe; **Luo:** Osembe; **Nandi:** Katutet, Mashembut, Mushembut; **Sabaot:** Mushembut, Musiembu.

**DESCRIPTION:** A small deciduous tree 3–10 m, with a **dense leafy spreading crown and large conspicuous pods** often remaining on the tree for a long time. **BARK:** Grey-brown, rough or smooth. **LEAVES:** Compound, feathery and acacia-like with 4–22 pairs of pinnae and **very many leaflets**, each narrow and up to 1 cm long, tip rounded. **FLOWERS:** Small, **cream-white-yellow, in fluffy spikes** up to 14 cm long, sweet scented. **FRUIT:** Woody pods both long and wide to 39 x 10 cm, almost straight. The central sections, each containing one seed, break away from the woody rim leaving a **pod skeleton on the tree**. About **10 papery winged seeds**.

**ECOLOGY:** A small tree of woodland and wooded grassland, widespread in Africa from Sierra Leone to Eritrea and south to Angola. Common in the Rift Valley and Western Provinces on grassy hillsides. A common tree in cropland in western Kenya; 400–2,300 m. Agroclimatic Zones II. Flowers in March–May and seeds in November–February in Bungoma.

**USES:** Firewood, medicine (roots, bark, leaves), bee forage, shade, ornamental, mulch, nitrogen-fixing, soil improvement, ceremonial.

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings.

**SEED:** 3,600–4,200 seeds per kg. Germination 60–100%.

**treatment:** Not necessary.

**storage:** Can be stored, but best to use fresh seed.

**MANAGEMENT:** Fast growing on good sites; pollarding, coppicing.

**REMARKS:** The tree has a pale brown occasionally pink-tinged heartwood and is moderately light and easy to work but is rarely used. This is the only tree *Entada* in Kenya; the other 3 are all climbers that are commonly seen covering trees. The most widespread of them is *E. leptostachya* (**Boran:** Hundad; **Kamba:** Mwaitha; **Samburu:** Ldalampo; **Somali:** Kobagor; **Swahili:** Mgambari), commonly found in the drier parts of the country, often climbing on acacias. It is widely used as a medicinal plant and the stems as a source of fibre. *E. rheedii* is restricted to evergreen forests at the coast. The

giant pods can be up to 1.5 m long. At the coast its seeds are often seen drifting in sea water. Seeds are often collected as ornamentals.

**FURTHER READING:** <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Mbuya et al., 1994; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990; Storrs, 1979.

