

Erythrophleum suaveolens

Caesalpinaceae

Indigenous

Trade names: Sasswood, mumara, ordeal tree.

Common names: **Ateso:** Earamor **Luo:** Odiodi **Runyoro:** Mumara.

Ecology: A tree widespread in tropical Africa from Senegal to Mozambique. It grows in lowland rain forest, woodlands and thickets in Uganda; most common in Bunyoro and lake-side forest, 1,000-1,500 m.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, timber, shade, ornamental (avenue tree).

Description: An unarmed forest tree, usually about 20 m (9-30 m) m, the trunk often wavy, short with large branches to a spreading crown, rounded and dense. Buttresses usually absent or short and blunt, the trunk spread out at the base. **BARK:** brown-black and rough with clear orange lenticels; flaking when older. **LEAVES:** bipinnate on a stalk to 35 cm with only 2-4 pairs of pinnae. Leaflets dark green, shiny and oval, about 8 **alternate on each side of the larger pinnae**, one sided at the base, variable in size, 3-9 cm long, **tips blunt but drawn out**. **FLOWERS:** tiny in fluffy cream-yellow spikes, densely crowded and very fragrant, hanging down from a branched stalk. **FRUIT:** **a woody flat pod 8-17 cm long and stalked**, straight or slightly curved, red-purple-brown, leathery then woody, splitting down one side (the other opens much later) to release 5-11 thick brown seeds, each about 1.5 cm.

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

Seed: Insects attack seeds while still in pods on the tree.

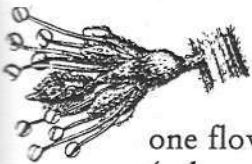
treatment:

storage:

Very liable to insect attack. Discard damaged seed and sow as soon as collected.

Management: Pruning, pollarding.

Remarks: The bark is very poisonous. One of the commonest African poisons formerly used as an "ordeal tree" to reveal guilt. Can be planted as a pure stand, as an avenue tree or to provide good shade for coffee or cocoa. The hard heavy heartwood, red-brown in colour, resists termites and fungal attack. It has been used for heavy construction and flooring.



one flower
(enlarged)

