

***Faidherbia albida* (*Acacia albida*)**

Fabaceae (Mimosaceae)

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Digo:** Mujeh; **English:** Apple-ring acacia; **Maasai:** Olasiti, Olsati, Olerai; **Nandi:** Seretuet; **Pokot:** Sangale, Sangak; **Sabaot:** Dalyet, Duyet, Duget; **Samburu:** Larai, Leroi; **Taita:** Iti, Mukababu; **Taveta:** Mkababu; **Teso:** Edurkoit; **Turkana:** Edurukoit, Edurkoit, Ekurichenait.

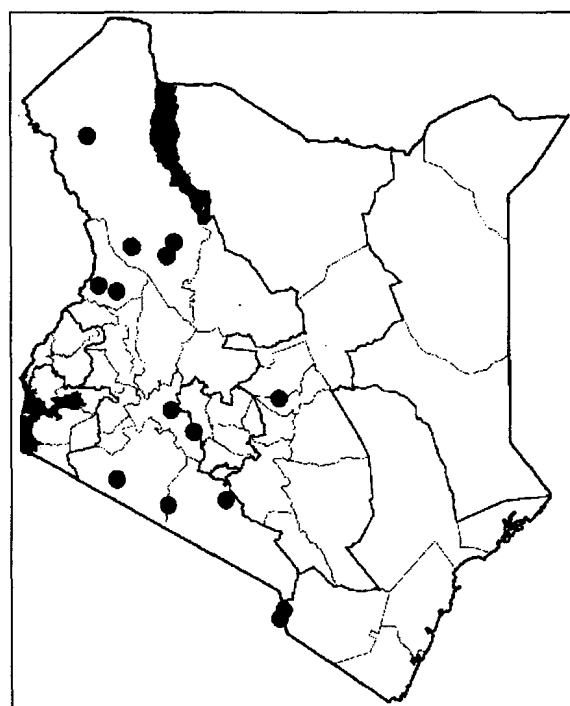
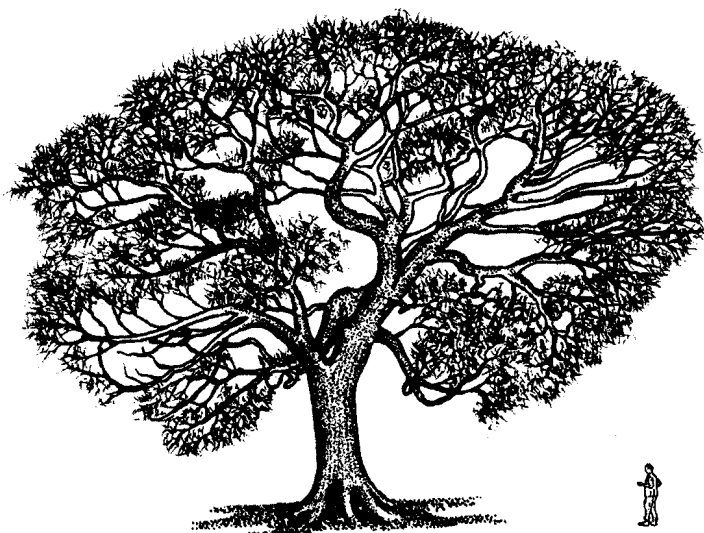
DESCRIPTION: A deciduous tree to 30 m with high rounded spreading crown. Seedlings have twice-pinnate leaves (no juvenile type), an aid to identification. **BARK:** Grey to brown on the stem, branches **shiny greyish white**, rough, young twigs pale grey, **zigzag** form. **THORNS:** White, in pairs, **straight** or slightly curved, to **2 cm**, **often pointing downwards**. **LEAVES:** Bipinnate, 3–8 pairs of pinnae each with 6–23 (usually 9–16) pairs of **grey-green** leaflets, up to 1 cm, **rounded and overlapping**. **FLOWERS:** In **slender spikes to 14 cm**, **cream-white**, attracting bees, fragrant, appearing before new leaves. **FRUIT:** Distinctive **twisted pods**, smooth, **bright orange**, to 25 cm long and quite thick, edge thickened, containing 10–20 seeds, ripening at the end of the dry season. Seeds are set free when the pods rot on the ground.

ECOLOGY: Distributed from the Middle East through eastern Africa and south to South Africa and Namibia. Also west through the Sahel to Gambia and Senegal. Widespread in semi-arid areas on a wide range of soil types and in different climates. In Kenya, prefers semi-arid flood plains with deep alluvial and sandy soils. Riverine in arid areas, 500–2,000 m; rainfall 200 (riverine)–900 mm. Common in Rift Valley, e.g. along the Turkwel River and around Loitokitok; also in Taveta. Agroclimatic Zones IV–VII (riverine).

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber (construction), posts, utensils, edible pods (eaten cooked or raw in times of famine by the Pokot and Turkana), flavouring (pods), medicine (bark), fodder (pods and leaves), mulch, shade, nitrogen-fixing, soil conservation and improvement, windbreaks, fibre (bark for strings), dye.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, direct sowing at site.

SEED: 7,500–13,000 seeds per kg. Germination 60–90% in 5–20 days.



Faidherbia albida (cont)

MANAGEMENT: Slow initial growth. Later fairly fast growing on good sites. Lopping, pollarding. Often left in sorghum fields by the Turkana.

REMARKS: The species is commonly used in agroforestry in West Africa where it is grown widely spaced and intercropped with sorghum and millet. Deep rooted. The wood is not durable in the ground. The naming of this species has been moved between *Acacia albida* and *Faidherbia albida*, and the taxonomy is still not clear. Future name changes may occur.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Mbuya et al., 1994; National Academy of Sciences, 1979; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Storrs, 1979; van Wyk, 1993.