

Faidherbia albida (Acacia albida)

Mimosaceae

Indigenous

Common names: **Ateso:** Edurakoit, ewoi **English:** Apple ring acacia.

Ecology: Native to the Middle East and Africa. Within Africa, widespread in semi-arid areas. In Uganda, it occurs mostly on flood plains and with *Acacia Senegal*, 700-1,800 m. It grows well in areas with a high watertable and alluvial, loamy or sandy soils which drain well.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, timber (construction), posts, utensils, flavouring (pod), medicine (bark), fodder (pods and leaves), shade, mulch, soil conservation, nitrogen fixation.

Description: One of the tallest of the Acacias; deciduous, sometimes to 30 m with high rounded spreading crown. Branchlets **zigzag, shiny grey**. **BARK:** dull grey, fissured and scaling; thorns in pairs, **straight 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. Seed are set free when the pods rot on the ground.

Propagation: Seedlings, direct sowing at site.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: about 9,000; germination 45-96%.

treatment: nick or immerse in hot water, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours.

storage: seed can be stored for many years if dried properly and kept free from insects. Add ash to reduce insect damage.

Management: Slow initial growth, later fairly fast growing on good sites, and even in poor sites provided the watertable is high; coppicing, pollarding.

Remarks: The species is now called *Faidherbia albida* because so many of its parts are unlike those of any other Acacia. It is deep-rooted so does not compete with food crops and is intercropped with sorghum and millet in West Africa. Unlike many trees, *A. albida* is in leaf throughout the dry season so available to stock when other forage is in short supply. Fallen pods, rich in protein, are eaten at the beginning of the rains and the leaves provide mulch.

