

Faidherbia albida (*Acacia albida*)

Mimosoideae

Indigenous

English: Apple-ring acacia, winter thorn**Nyanja:** Msangu**Senga:** Msangu**Tumbuka:** Msangu**Ecology:** Widespread in semi-arid Africa on a wide range of soil types. Found in most of Zambia except North Western and Copperbelt Provinces and common in valleys of Eastern Province.**Uses:** Firewood, charcoal, timber (construction, canoes, utensils), posts, medicine (bark), fodder (pods and leaves), shade, mulch, **nitrogen fixation, soil conservation and improvement**, windbreak, tannin, dye (bark, roots).**Description:** A large deciduous tree to 30 m high, crown wide and rounded. **BARK:** grey-brown, cracked when old; young twigs shiny grey; **pairs of spines straight, to 2 cm.** **LEAVES:** compound, grey-green; shed leaves in the rainy season. **FLOWERS:** in dense **cream-yellow spikes about 10 cm**, fragrant; seen in May–June on the bare tree (hence, winter thorn). **FRUIT:** pods ripen in July–September, **conspicuous thick, orange-brown, twisted in odd shapes**, hard and shiny. Parts do not break open but rot to set free 10–20 flat round seeds which lie in soft tissue.**Propagation:** Seedlings, directseeding.**Seed:** No. of seeds per kg: 7,500–15,000. Germination 45–96%.**treatment:** Soak in hot water and allow to cool for 24 hours.**storage:** Seed can be stored indefinitely if kept in a dry, cool place free from insects.**Management:** Lopping, pollarding.**Remarks:** Slow initial growth, later fairly fast growing on good sites. Unripe pods can be poisonous to cattle. It is deep-rooted and its peculiar leafing habits make it an ideal tree for intercropping. Cereals tend to do better underneath the trees—a sign of soil improvement. In Luangwa Valley sorghum is cultivated under *Faidherbia* trees and Chief Tembwe has observed that this tree indicates fertile soil. A good tree for planting on soil-conservation structures. A decoction of root bark is used to treat cough, fever and diarrhoea. Gum, bark and leaves are used to treat diarrhoea, haemorrhage and colds. Fruits are eaten to control diarrhoea. The bark is used to clean teeth and is believed to contain fluorine. Leaves and ripe pods are used as fodder during the dry season. A mature tree can produce up to 135 kg of pods per year.