

*Flacourtia indica*

Flacourtiaceae

Indigenous

**Nyanja:** Nthudza  
**Senga:** Thumbuzya  
**Tumbuka:** Thumbuzga

**Ecology:** A small spiny tree widespread in tropical Africa, also in Asia, 0–2,400 m, always scattered, in wooded grassland and bushland; often riverine. It prefers sandy soil with a high water-table. Occasionally, it has been cultivated for its edible fruit. In Zambia, it grows in valleys and on the plateau.

**Uses:** **Firewood, timber** (tools), **food** (fruit), medicine (leaves, bark, roots), fodder (leaves), live fence.

**Description:** A deciduous **spiny shrub** usually 3–5 m; spines on the trunk sometimes branched, up to 12 cm long. **BARK:** **rough pale yellow-grey**, branches may have a **yellowish powder**, later dark grey. **LEAVES:** variable in size, oval to 12 cm, edge toothed, 4–7 pairs, **veins clear** on both surfaces, a stalk to 2 cm. **FLOWERS:** small, cream and fragrant; male flowers with very **many stamens**; female flowers with a divided, spreading style, October–December. **FRUIT:** **red-purple-black, round and** juicy but acid, to **2.5 cm across**, persisting on the tree. They contain up to 10 small hard seeds; ripen May–July.

**Propagation:** Seedlings.

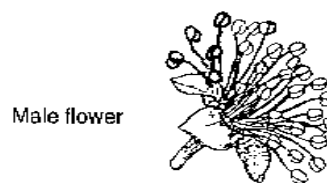
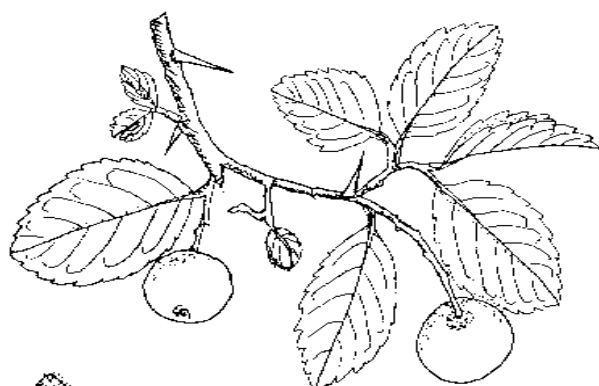
**Seed:** No. of seeds per kg: ±200,000. Germination is slow.

**treatment:** Soak seed in hot water and allow to cool for 24 hours.

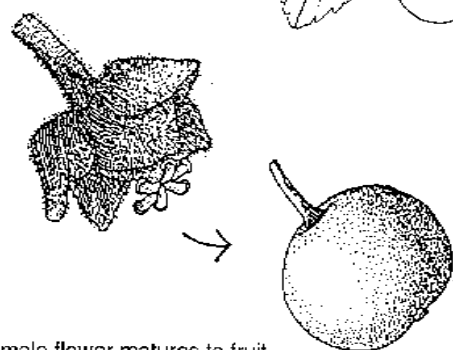
**storage:** Can be stored at room temperature for up to 6 months.

**Management:** Coppicing, trim for a hedge.

**Remarks:** A wild fruit which is well liked. It regenerates naturally from seed and coppice. It has been used in Zanzibar as a good hedge and windbreak. Not yet domesticated in Eastern Province. The fruits are used to treat jaundice and enlarged spleen. The leaves and roots are used to treat schistosomiasis, malaria and diarrhoea. The roots are used to treat laryngitis, pneumonia, intestinal worms and as an astringent, a diuretic and for pain relief.



Male flower



Female flower matures to fruit

