

Flemingia macrophylla (F. congesta)

Papilionoideae

South-East Asia

Common names:

Ecology:

A shrub native to South-East Asia and east to China where it grows along water courses in secondary forest, 0-2,000 m. It has been introduced to Central and West Africa and is naturalized in some places. More recently it has been tried in East Africa. It is a hardy plant, tolerating a range of soils and rainfall patterns, surviving both shady conditions and long dry spells. The shrub survives waterlogging and develops deep roots.

Uses:

Firewood, medicine, fodder, mulch, nitrogen fixation, soil conservation, soil improvement, dye.

Description:

A shrub, to about 2.5 m. LEAVES: large, three leaflets, stalk to 3 cm rather flat, grooved and hairy. Dull leaflets, tough, hairy, three main veins strongly marked, lateral unequal sided. FLOWERS: hairy branched stalk to 18 cm with dense pea-shaped flowers, small, bright pink. FRUIT: numerous inflated pods, almost cylindrical, yellow-brown hairs, tip beaked to 1.5 cm. Seeds are round, shiny black.

Propagation:

Seedlings, direct sowing.

Seed info.:

No. of seeds per kg: 45,000-100,000.

treatment:

soak the seed in hot water and allow to cool; germination rate with fresh seed can be 50%.

storage:

seed can be stored.

Management:

Fast growing; weeding during the early stages of establishment, coppicing.

Remarks:

Leaves resist decomposition and thus provide good mulch, reducing weed growth and maintaining soil humidity. The shrub is host to the pod fly *Melanogromyza obtusa*, an important pest of pigeon pea.

