

Gliricidia sepium

Papilionoideae

Central America, Mexico

Common names: **Eng:** Mexican lilac, mother of cocoa, quick stick, tree of iron.

Ecology: It grows in a variety of soils, both acidic and low in fertility, mainly in humid coastal lowlands or lake basins, 0-1,600 m in Tanzania.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, posts, fodder (leaves, shoots, pods), bee forage, mulch, green manure, shade, ornamental, nitrogen fixation, soil conservation, soil improvement, live fence, green firebreak.

Description: A leafy shrub or tree to 8 m, mature trunk short and twisted, to 30 cm thick. Young leafy branches normally used. **BARK:** grey-light brown, smooth, cracked with age. **LEAVES:** **fern-like**, with **many pointed leaflets** on a leaf stalk to 25 cm, hanging down. **FLOWERS:** pretty, **mauve-pink**, centre yellow, **grow on the woody stems**. **FRUIT:** pods, thin and flat to 15 cm long, yellow-grey then black when dry; 3-8 seeds set free when pod breaks open.

Propagation: Seedlings, cuttings, direct sowing.

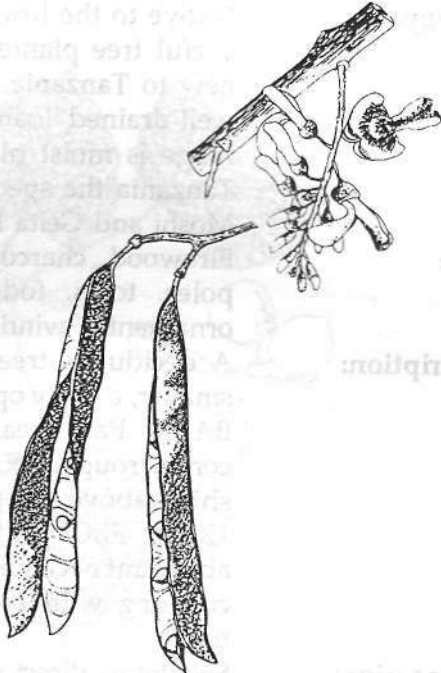
Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: 6,500-8,000. Germination over 90%.

treatment: soak seed in hot water, cool overnight before sowing,

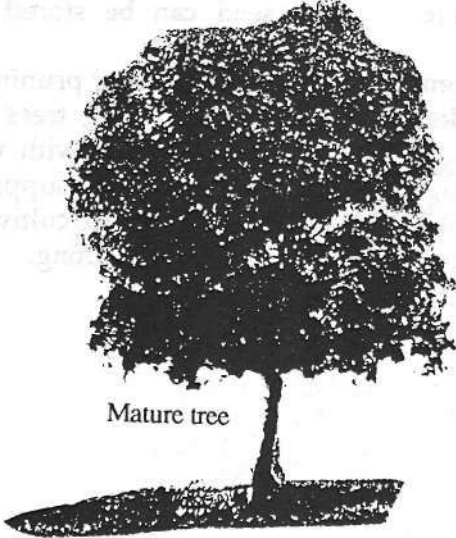
storage: seed does not store for long; use fresh seed or cuttings for best results.

Management: A fast-growing species; coppicing, pollarding, lopping.

Remarks: The latin name means "rat killer" as a poison can be made from the leaves. Bark, roots and seeds may also contain poison. Although leaves can be fodder for goats and cattle, they are toxic to non-ruminants such as horses, donkeys and pigs. As leaves are not very palatable, mix with grass, straw or other roughage as a high-protein supplement. A very useful quick fence can be grown with crossed stakes which sprout easily. Wood is resistant to termites. The tree has been used to form a firebelt around forests and farms as it is fire resistant.



Young tree



Mature tree