

## *Grevillea robusta*

Proteaceae

Australia: New South Wales, Queensland

**English:** Silky oak

**Nyanja:** Gilevilia

**Senga:** Gilevilia

**Ecology:** A very successful Australian tree planted worldwide for shade and ornament, also in Africa, 0–3,000 m. It grows well on medium loam or light sandy soils, but not on heavy clays or waterlogged soils.

**Uses:** Firewood, charcoal, **timber** (furniture), **poles**, bee forage, **ornamental**, **windbreak**, soil conservation.

**Description:** A semi-evergreen tree usually to 15 m with a straight trunk and angular branches to an oval leafy crown. **BARK:** dark grey, rough and thick, vertically grooved. **LEAVES:** distinctive, compound, “fern-like”, **very divided**, pale green above, **silver-grey below**; stalk to 30 cm long. **FLOWERS:** many, in one-sided golden-orange spikes, much nectar which attracts bees and sunbirds, September–October. **FRUIT:** dark brown capsules, about 1 cm with a long beak containing 2 winged seeds.

**Propagation:** Seedlings.

**Seed:** The species is a prolific seeder but seed is difficult to collect. Germination rate varies from 30 to 90%. No. of seeds per kg: 70,000–110,000.

**treatment:** Not necessary.

**storage:** Seed can only be stored for up to three months at room temperature. Storage period can be extended up to 2 years if refrigerated.

**Management:** Pollarding, lopping.

**Remarks:** Its introduction in Eastern Province is fairly recent and it seems to do well near dambo areas but not in waterlogged or upland areas. The tree grows well with food crops if managed to reduce shade, but the leaves do not rot easily. The timber is hard and has an attractive grain. Moderate to fast growing. The tree is drought-hardy and termite-resistant once established. In order to retain the winged seeds, they should be collected when the capsules begin to turn brown. Use of this tree is still at a trial stage in Eastern Province, therefore, it should be planted under supervised extension.

