

Mexico, Guatemala, Central America

Common names: **English:** Leucaena.

Ecology: This species is the second most widely cultivated *Leucaena* species for planting in the tropical highlands. It grows naturally throughout the highlands of southern Mexico and Central America south to Nicaragua where there is much rain and cloud and a dry season of only 1-5 months. Often an understorey tree in pine forests, it grows usually at 1,000-1,500 m and can tolerate acid soils. In Uganda, it is now being tried in the highlands of Rukungiri and Kabale Districts and is showing promise. It grows faster than *L. leucocephala* at higher altitudes and has shown some resistance to the leucaena psyllid.

Uses: Firewood, fodder, mulch, nitrogen fixation, soil conservation.

Description: A shrub about 2 m or a tree to 20 m—as the name suggests, very variable. Usually upright with light open branching. **LEAVES: bipinnate, the minute leaflets only 3-6 mm with large glands on the leaf stalk.** **FLOWERS:** flower heads like "balls" **6-15 mm across, pink-purple with red anthers**, over 40 flowers in the head. **FRUIT: small straight pods 5-15 cm long**, 5-12 mm wide, **deep red-purple when young**, later brown. Many pods may hang together in heavy drooping clusters. Each pod contains 18-26 **very small seeds**, taking a month to mature.

Propagation: Direct sowing at site, seedlings.

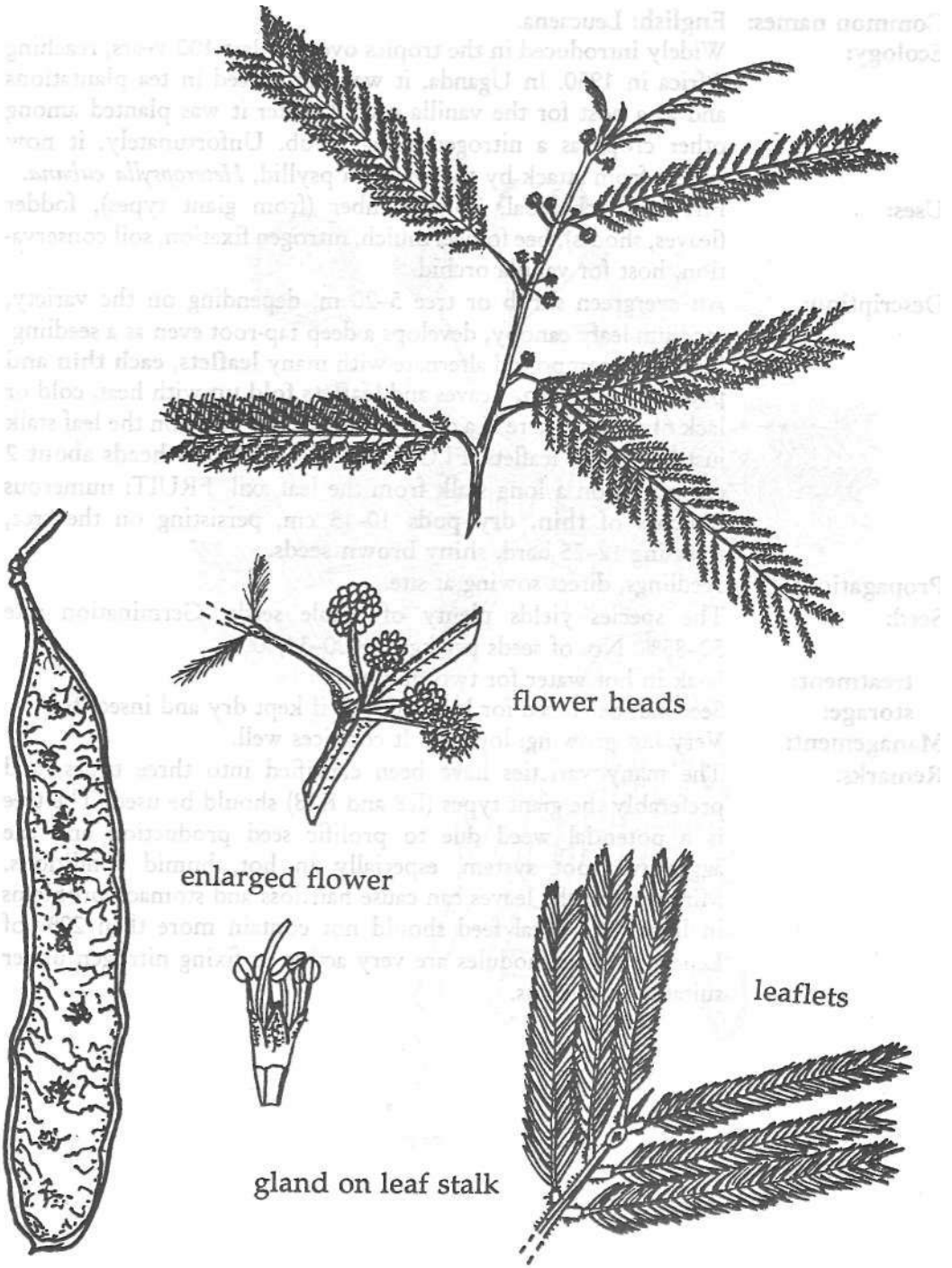
Seed: Obtained from mature pods; the smallest of all *Leucaena* and very hard. No. of seed per kg: 59,000-82,000.

treatment: soaking seeds in boiling water for 10 seconds followed by soaking overnight in cold water will improve the germination rate, can be stored.

storage:

Management: Fast growing. Coppicing, pollarding and pruning.

Remarks: This species may replace *Leucaena leucocephala* which is being attacked by the leucaena psyllid, *Heteropsylla cubana*. *Leucaena* spp. have been tried in agroforestry systems with intensive management. Falling leaves and loppings add organic matter to the soil and the species fix nitrogen. *Leucaena* are highly valued as a fast-growing tree providing fodder, fuel and shade as well as a useful light timber. They can be planted with coffee to provide light shade.



flower heads

enlarged flower

gland on leaf stalk

leaflets