

Melia azedarach

Meliaceae

Western Asia, Himalayas

- Common names: Eng: bead tree, Chinaberry, Persian lilac; **Swah:** mmelia, mwarubaini nusu.
- Ecology: A popular ornamental tree planted since early times in the tropics and sub-tropics. It grows on most soils, both acidic and saline, from the coast to 2,000 m. In Tanzania this species has been recommended for fuel and pole production in most dry areas as it is drought resistant.
- Uses: Firewood, poles, timber (furniture), posts, tool handles, medicine (leaves), bee forage, shade, ornamental, beads (seeds), insecticide, dye (leaves).
- Description: A small tree, up to 10 m, usually deciduous. **BARK:** grey, later rough and brown, branchlets with bumpy breathing pores. **LEAVES:** twice compound, on branched stalks to 40 cm long, hanging in terminal bunches, leaflets **slightly toothed, tip long and pointed, to 8 cm**, shiny green, 3-9 leaflets together. **FLOWERS:** striking **rounded clusters**, pale **lilac**, each tiny flower with a **dark purple centre**, fragrant. **FRUIT:** fleshy yellow-orange and oval, in clusters, 1.5 cm long, persist on the bare tree. Each fruit has 4-6 seeds inside.
- Propagation** Seedlings, wildings, direct sowing.
- Seed info.:** The species is a prolific seeder. No. of seeds per kg: 1,500-2,000. Germination is good but sporadic; 85-100% in 4-10 weeks.
- treatment:** none or soak the seeds in cold water for up to a week.
- storage:** can retain viability up to 2 years if kept dry.
- Management:** Fairly fast growing; pollarding, coppicing, pruning.
- Remarks:** The drupes are extremely poisonous to human beings livestock and poultry. The tree is very fast growing in its natural range but less so in Tanzania. Naturalized in parts of Zimbabwe and South Africa, it has become a weed **that** is difficult to control. Leaves are not browsed by livestock. The tree can provide quick shade, building poles and fuel. Often confused with the related *Azadirachta indica*—both trees have medicinal uses. The leaves are boiled with water and the liquid used for stomach complaints.

