

Melia azedarach

Meliaceae

Western Asia, Himalayas

English: Persian lilac, bead tree

Senga: Paizoni

Tumbuka: Paizoni

Ecology: A common ornamental tree planted since early times in the tropics and subtropics, from coast to 2,000 m. It is planted throughout Zambia, including Eastern Province. It grows in most soils, including acidic and saline and is fairly drought-resistant.

Uses: Firewood, timber (furniture), **poles**, medicine (leaves), bee forage, shade, ornamental, **windbreak, insecticide** (leaves), essential oil.

Description: A semi-deciduous tree, usually 5–6 m, with a leafy rounded crown. **BARK:** grey and smooth, later rough and brown. **LEAVES:** **compound**, on branched stalks, to 40 cm long; leaflets bright shiny green, narrow to 8 cm, the edge **irregularly toothed**, **the tip pointed**. **FLOWERS:** small and fragrant but in striking rounded clusters; each flower with **5 pale purple-to-white petals and a dark purple centre**. **FRUIT:** **fleshy yellow berries**, oval to 1.5 cm, persist on the bare tree. Each fruit has a stone containing 3–5 dark brown seeds.

Propagation: Seedlings, wildings, direct seeding.

Seed: This species is a prolific seeder. High germination rate. No. of seeds per kg: 2,100–3,000. Germination is good but sporadic 85–100% in 4–10 weeks.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Seed can be kept up to 2 years if kept dry.

Management: Pollarding, lopping, coppicing, pruning.

Remarks: The berries are extremely poisonous to human beings and livestock. Leaves are not browsed by livestock. The tree is moderately termite-resistant and fast growing. The seeds have been used as beads. This tree is often confused with the related *Azadirachta indica*—both trees have medicinal uses. The leaves are boiled with water and the liquid used for stomach-ache. Stem borers attack the tree and make holes, approximately pencil size in diameter.

