

## ***Milicia excelsa***

(*Chlorophora excelsa*)

Moraceae

### **Indigenous**

**Kf:** *Gonji*

### **Ecology**

A giant deciduous tree of lowland forest with *Pouteria altissima* and sometimes left in fields or villages. It is logged commercially throughout its range. Widespread throughout tropical Africa, Ivory Coast to Angola, Sudan and Ethiopia to Mozambique. It can grow well with mean annual rainfall as low as 700 mm provided it has access to extra water from a perennial stream or underground, but does not tolerate waterlogging and the soils must be well drained and relatively fertile. It is a forest pioneer and coppices and regenerates well. In Ethiopia, it grows in Moist and Wet Kolla agroclimatic zones of Gambella, Ilubabor and Kefa, 500–1,000 m.

### **Uses**

Firewood, charcoal, timber (furniture), shade, ornamental, mulch.

### **Description**

Old trees may have a straight trunk clear to 21 m and 2 m in diameter, reaching up to 50 m, the small umbrella crown growing from a few thick branches. **BARK:** Thick, pale grey then brown, with milky latex, as in all parts. **LEAVES:** Long, oval to 18 cm, rather thin to a well-pointed tip, 10–18 pairs of clear side veins, the base somewhat rounded, often unequal sided, stalk to 4 cm, leaf edge finely toothed and wavy. **FLOWERS:** Male and female trees, both with small flowers in green spikes,

male flowers in drooping catkins to 15 cm, female shorter and thicker. **FRUIT:** Like a long green mulberry 6–7 cm, the loose fleshy pulp attracting birds and bats. Small hard seeds lie in the pulp. Fruits ferment rapidly on the ground.



### **Propagation**

Seedlings, wildings, direct sowing at site.

### **Seed**

The tree is not a prolific seeder. Germination is slow and poor. Collect fruit (caterpillar-like syncarps) by cutting small twigs from the crown. Normally, the seeds are mature before the syncarp is fully ripe. If the syncarps are not totally ripe, they should be spread out in the shade for ripening. When ripe, they are soaked in water overnight and the seed are squeezed off the fruit. Seed can be separated from the pulp by floating; the seeds will sink. Dry seeds in the shade for a few days before sowing. 250,000–1,000,000 seed per kg; germination rate up to 45%.

**Treatment:** Not necessary.

**Storage:** Seed loses viability quickly.

### **Management**

Fast growing compared with other hardwoods; pruning, coppicing. Regeneration rates are low in most areas. Produces root suckers.

### **Remarks**

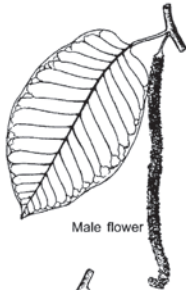
The wood is termite resistant. The valuable timber has been used for houses, flooring, boats, etc., but especially for quality furniture. The heartwood is brown to yellow and easy to work. The wood resists termite attack almost as well as teak.



Photo: Patrick Maundu



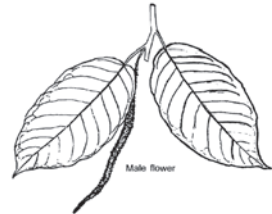
Female flowers



Male flower



Female flower



Male flower

