

Millettia dura**Indigenous**

COMMON NAMES: Embu: Muvanga; Kikuyu: Muhatia; Kisii: Mwongwa; Meru: Mwanga.

DESCRIPTION: A much-branched deciduous tree to 15 m with light foliage. **BARK:** Grey and smooth. **LEAVES:** Compound, dull green, 5–12 pairs leaflets, each 1 to 5 cm, often unequal-sided. **Young leaves and stalks have orange-brown hairs.** The base of the stalk has a thickening (the pulvinus). **FLOWERS:** Mauve sprays to 20 cm, often on the bare tree, pea-shaped flowers, petals over 2 cm long. **FRUIT:** Thick flat pods, to 25 x 2 cm, splitting open explosively.

ECOLOGY: A small tree of moist forest edges or beneath more open forest in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia. Found naturally in Kenya in secondary scrub and forest margins of Central Province, 1,500–2,000 m, but planted successfully elsewhere, as it is drought resistant. Agroclimatic Zones II–III.

USES: Poles, tool handles, fodder (leaves), shade, ornamental, mulch, soil conservation and improvement.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings (sow seed in pots), direct sowing at site, wildings.

SEED: About 10,000 seeds per kg. Germination is very good; up to 80% after 20 days.

treatment: None, or soak in cold water for 6 hours.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods if kept free from insects. Add ash to reduce insect damage.

MANAGEMENT: Fairly fast growing; coppicing, pollarding.

REMARKS: The tree was formerly used as a shade tree for coffee. The wood is tough and resistant to termites. Another species, *Millettia usaramensis* (**Giriama:** M'thupa, Muhawa; **Swahili:** Mti chuma) is a small shrub or tree found in coastal bush and forest edges. It has mauve to purple-blue flowers. Fruit are smaller (about 1 x 10 cm). Seeds germinate easily. It is used for furniture, poles for house construction and as an ornamental. It occurs in Kenya and Zanzibar south to Mozambique.

**Fabaceae (Papilionaceae)**

The 6 or so *Millettia* species occurring in Kenya are among the most threatened as half of them are endemic with limited distribution. The genus *Millettia* as a whole has close to 100 members, mainly found in Africa and Asia.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Blundell, 1987; Dharani, 2002; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993 (*M. usaramensis*); Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002 (*M. usara-mensis*).

