

Moringa oleifera (M. pterygosperma)

Moringaceae

India, Himalayas

- Common names:** Eng: drumstick tree, horse-radish tree; **Lugu:** mlonge, mlonje; **Swah:** mlonge.
- Ecology:** Native to the western Himalayas and India but today planted all over the tropics. Naturalized in coastal areas of East Africa, it prefers low altitudes, usually 0-500 m, on well-drained sandy soils with a high watertable, but is also drought resistant. In Tanzania it has been planted at lower elevations throughout the country.
- Uses:** Food (young leaves, young fruit), spice/flavouring (young roots), medicine, fodder (leaves, young fruit), bee forage, shade, soil conservation, windbreak, fibre, live fence, tannin, oil (seeds), water purification (seeds).
- Description:** A deciduous tree to 10 m, usually smaller, **pale feathery foliage**. **BARK:** grey, thick and corky, peeling in patches. **LEAVES:** pale green, **thrice compound**, the whole leaf 30-60 cm, leaflets **usually oval, tip rounded 1-2 cm long**. **FLOWERS:** **cream**, fading yellow, in long sprays, sweet scented, attracting insects. **FRUIT:** long capsules to 45 cm, **bluntly triangular in sections**, splitting when dry to release **dark brown 3-winged seeds** from the pith.
- Propagation** Direct sowing, seedlings. Cuttings of more than 1 m can be used successfully.
- Seed info.:** No. of seeds per kg: 4,000-5,000. Germination rate 60-70% in 60-75 days.
- treatment:** not necessary or soak in cold water for 6 hours.
- storage:** can be stored for up to a year if kept dry.
- Management:** Fast growing; pollarding, coppicing, lopping.
- Remarks:** It is best suited to moist localities, but is also a useful tree for homesteads in dry areas because of its food value. The ground up seeds have been used successfully in the Sudan, Burundi and Kenya to clear muddy water—a very valuable property. The "Ben oil" from seeds keeps its quality and so can lubricate precision machinery, e.g. watches. It is also used for salad oil, soap and cosmetics.

