

Moringa oleifera

Moringaceae

India, Arabia

Common names: **English:** Horse-radish tree.

Ecology: This species is commonly grown by Indian families in their back yards. It can still be found growing in dry areas around Butiaba pier.

Uses: Food (young leaves, young fruit), medicine, fodder (leaves, fruit), bee forage, soil conservation, shade, windbreak, live fence, boundary marker, fibres, spice (young roots), 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, each flower with 5 petals, one erect and 4 bent back, sweet-scented, attracting insects. **FRUIT:** long capsules, to 45 cm, **bluntly triangular in section**, splitting when dry to release **9 dark brown 3-winged seeds** from the pith.

Propagation: Direct sowing on site, cuttings, seedlings.

Seed: Germination rate 60-70%. No. of seeds per kg: 4,000-5,000.

treatment: not necessary.

storage: properly dried seed can be stored for a long time in sealed containers in a refrigerator.

Management: Fast growing; pollarding, coppicing, lopping. Grows easily from poles.

Remarks: A tree which is easily propagated and recommended for homesteads for its food value. The "Ben oil" from the seeds keeps its quality and so can lubricate precision machinery like watches. It is also used for salad oil, soap and cosmetics. The ground-up seeds have been used successfully in the Sudan, Burundi and Kenya to clear muddy water—a very valuable property. Could be given more attention in Uganda.

