

*Morus nigra* (*M. japonica*)

## Moraceae

Western Asia, Iran

**English:** Black mulberry**Nyanja:** Malubeni**Senga:** Malubeni**Tumbuka:** Malubeni

**Ecology:** In Africa, *Morus nigra* and *Morus alba* have both been planted for some time, each species requiring slightly different conditions. Although their origin is temperate, *Morus* spp. do surprisingly well in dry areas from sea level to 2,000 m with little attention. Both species are grown in villages in Zambia as ornamental fruit trees. The common species in Eastern Province is *Morus nigra* which grows best at lower altitudes, but in the Northern Province experimental work is being done on *Morus alba* for silkworm production. This species has more general uses than *Morus nigra*.

**Uses:** Firewood, **food** (fruit), **fodder** (leaves, fruit), bee forage, ornamental, soil conservation, live fence.

**Description:** A small semi-deciduous **shrub usually 2–5 m**, with a spreading irregular crown. **BARK:** grey-brown, rough with age, resinous gum when cut. **LEAVES:** **large and heart-shaped, 10–15 cm; the edge with large teeth;** tip pointed, dull green and rough above, slightly hairy below. **FLOWERS:** sexes separate on the same tree. Small green flowers on short drooping spikes. **FRUIT:** red then **black when mature, to 2.5 cm long** (stains badly).

**Propagation:** Cuttings, seedlings.

**Seed:** Poor germination. No. of seeds per kg: 325,000–700,000.

**treatment:** Soak in cold water for 48 hours.

**storage:** Can be stored for a long time.

**Management:** Lopping.

**Remarks:** The tree grows rapidly, especially from cuttings; bearing fruit in about 3 years. Fruiting is abundant and the fruit is a favourite with children, but at present it is not a commercial crop. Both goats and cattle browse leaves and shoots; so young saplings need protection.

