

Parinari curatellifolia subsp. *mobola*

Rosaceae/Chrysobalanaceae

Indigenous

English: Hissing tree, mobola plum**Nyanja:** Mumbula, mupundu**Senga:** Mbula

Ecology: A tall tree occurring north to Kenya and Senegal and south to the northern part of South Africa in all types of woodland and evergreen thicket, 0–1,900 m. Common in Zambia, especially in sandy soils and sandy loams. It is considered an indicator of a high water-table, and is often left in fields. It is scattered in distribution and it is fire-resistant.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, timber (building, furniture, mortars), beehives (bark), **poles, food** (fruit), medicine (fruit, bark), edible oil (seed), fodder (leaves, fruit).

Description: An evergreen tree to 15 m, with a tall **straight trunk, erect branches and dense rounded crown**, occasionally buttressed at the base. **BARK:** rough, dark grey-brown, grooved, later flaking in large squares. **The sap is reddish.** Young shoots with yellow-brown hairs. **LEAVES:** **oval and alternate, with clear parallel veins**, shiny green above but hairy grey-white below, to 8 cm long. **FLOWERS:** small, white-pink in short **flat-topped heads**, to 6 cm across. Flower stalks and calyx have yellow-brown woolly hairs. **FRUIT:** **oval to 5 cm**, with grey scales over yellow-red-brown skin; ripen September–November. The fibrous yellow flesh is sweet but sharp and contains a hard stone with one edible seed kernel.

Propagation: Seedlings, rootsuckers.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: 250–350. Germination is poor and very slow.

treatment: Carefully break the seed coat with a hammer or a stone.

storage: Seed can be stored.

Management: Coppicing.

Remarks: The fruit is highly valued and collected to sell in local markets; usually eaten raw but also added to porridge and used for drinks. The flesh is high in vitamin C and the kernel rich in edible oil. The timber is very hard, heavy and durable but difficult to cut and plane. It is also borer-proof and fire-resistant but splits easily so can be used for fences as an alternative to bamboo. The bark is used to treat pneumonia and fever.

