

Parkia filicoidea

Fabaceae (Mimosaceae)

Indigenous**STANDARD/TRADE NAMES:** Mnienzi.**COMMON NAMES:** **Digo:** Myenze; **English:** African locust bean; **Swahili:** Mnienze, Mkunde.

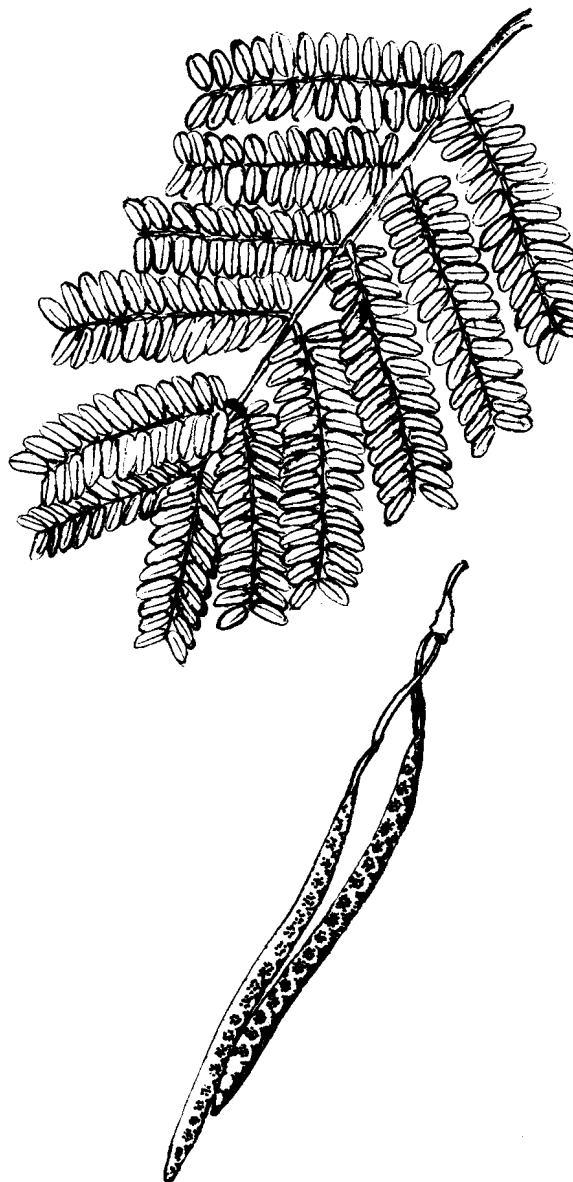
DESCRIPTION: A deciduous rainforest tree, 8–30 m, with a spreading flat crown and small rounded buttresses.

BARK: Scaly or smooth, grey to yellow-brown, dark and fissured with age. **Orange-coloured resin if cut.**

LEAVES: **Bipinnate and feathery** with 4–14 pinnae on each side on a stalk to 20 cm. About 11–17 pairs of leaflets on each pinna, the **leaflet oblong, slightly curved, tip rounded, 2–3 cm.**

FLOWERS: Easy to recognize, small flowers in **bright red club-shaped heads hanging down on stalks to 30 cm, with a strong unpleasant scent (attracting fruit bats). Heads up to 8 cm long.**

FRUIT: Characteristic pods hang down in **clusters, dark brown-purple, 30–60 cm long** with stalk, the pod somewhat narrowed between the seeds. **Thick black seeds lie in a dry mealy yellow pulp** which tastes sweet.



ECOLOGY: Distributed from Nigeria in West Africa to the eastern African countries and south to northern Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Angola. In Kenya, it is a coastal species found in moist lowland evergreen forest or swamp forest, 0–350 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–III.

USES: Firewood, furniture (stools), beehives, utensils (water containers), edible young pod, edible mature seed (emergency food only), fodder (pods), bee forage, tannin (bark), dye (bark).

PROPAGATION: Seedlings (sow seed in pots), wildings.

SEED: Contained in a non-splitting pod which falls to the ground with the seed. To extract the seed, the pod must be crushed and the seed separated from the pulp.

treatment: Briefly boil the seed, allow to cool and soak for 12 hours.

storage: The pods and seeds are attacked by insects even when still on the mother tree. Seeds should be screened before storage. Store in sealed containers in a cool place and add ash to reduce insect damage.

REMARKS: Similar species in West Africa are often the only trees left standing in the savanna because their food products are well known. Leaves, rich in nitrogen, make valuable mulch. Pods are used in numerous West African food dishes and also as cattle feed. Seeds contain a high percentage of fat and protein. The fruit pulp is rich in carbohydrates, of which a good proportion is sugar. The bark contains both tannin and a red-brown dye used to colour leather. It is a beautiful avenue tree and deserves greater promotion. The more than 2 dozen members of this genus are found throughout the tropics.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Beentje, 1994; Katende et al., 1995; Ruffo et al., 2002; Storrs, 1979.

