Piliostigma thonningii (Bauhinia thonningii) **Caesalpinioideae**

Indigenous

English:	Monkey bread
Kunda:	Chitimbe
Nyanja:	Msekese
Senga:	Chitimbe
Tumbuka:	Chitimbe

Ecology: A shrubby tree found all over Africa from West Africa to southern African grasslands, 0–1,850 m, growing in a variety of soils. It grows throughout Zambia except on the nyika plateau. When fields are left fallow these trees often emerge.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, timber, poles, **food** (pods), **medicine** (leaves, bark, roots, pods), **fodder** (pods, shoots), bee forage, ornamental, rope (bark fibre), tannin, dye (pods, seeds, bark, roots).

Description: A semi-deciduous tree usually 3–5 m, the branches often twisted. BARK: thick, rough, fibrous underbark. LEAVES: distinctive **2-lobed,** rounded to 15 cm long; a small hair in the deep notch; leathery pale green, **lower surface brown hairy with raised veins.** FLOWERS: **white-pink,** fragrant in **drooping sprays** to 20 cm, November–March. Male and female trees. FRUIT: flat, **brown woody pods about 20 cm** long and 5 cm across, the surface hairy. Pods may decay on the ground to set free seed. Pulp surrounding seeds is edible, but seed is only used as famine food; May–September; remaining a long time on the tree.

Propagation: Seedlings.

Seed: The tree produces many seeds with good germination rate. No. of seeds per kg: ±7,300, difficult to extract.

   treatment: Soak in cold water for 24–48 hours.

   storage: Can be stored for several years.

Management: Coppicing, pollarding.

Remarks: This is a good tree for intercropping. Commercial farmers in Southern Province sometimes crush dried pods with molasses and minerals to make a cattle feed. Small-scale farmers could benefit from using pods as supplementary feed. The wood is termite-resistant. The leaves are used to treat cough and diarrhoea, the roots for severe menstrual bleeding and are also said to cure dysentery, coughs, sore throat and chest problems. Crushed leaves are used to treat malaria, snakebite and toothache.