

Pinus patula

Pinaceae

Mexico

COMMON NAMES: **English:** Mexican weeping pine; **Kikuyu:** Muchinda nugu.

DESCRIPTION: An evergreen tree to 35 m with light green, **weeping foliage** and a long straight trunk, branches more or less horizontal, turning up at the tips. **BARK:** Grey to dark brown, fairly smooth, papery red-brown on young branches. **LEAVES:** Long slender 'needles', **soft but hard-tipped, 15–23 cm long, in bundles of 3.** **CONES:** Female: small hard red spheres mature in 2 years to shiny brown cones; **base oblique, to 10 cm long, in clusters of 2–5 without stalks.** Male: on the same tree, **short terminal catkins**, yellow-brown, producing clouds of pollen. Seeds develop below the cone scales and are released over a long period.

ECOLOGY: Probably the most widely planted pine tree in tropical Africa and generally widespread as a plantation tree. It is tolerant of most soils and will grow in grassland. While growing best with over 1,000 mm rain and a cool climate, it can also grow in more adverse conditions. There are large plantations of this species in western Kenya, the Lambwe Valley and parts of Central Province. Agroclimatic Zones I–III.

USES: Firewood, timber (boxes, pulpwood and construction), posts (treated with preservatives), shade, ornamental, resin.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, wildings. Soil for pines should be inoculated by mixing in some soil collected beneath mature pine trees.

SEED: Approximately 140,000 seeds per kg; germination 75–85% in 35–60 days. A large proportion of the seeds are usually empty.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods.

MANAGEMENT: Fast growing; pruning and thinning for trees grown in timber plantations.

REMARKS: Approximately 30% of all plantation trees in Kenya are of this species. It should not be grown near crops due to its shallow root system. More suitable for woodlots. The genus *Pinus* has close to 100 members, found mainly in Europe, South Asia and South America. They are monoecious cone-bearing trees with both scale leaves that are shed and needle-like leaves borne in clusters. They are important timber trees, a source of pulp for paper and of resin, which finds its way to pharmaceutical industries. *P. patula* is the most commonly planted in Kenya but a few other species are also grown. The wood is white to pale brown and light soft. It finds use in doors, furniture and house ceilings. Wide variations in daily temperatures may result in the wood cracking.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Albrecht, 1993; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Dharani, 2002; Katende et al., 1995; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990; Storrs, 1979.

