

Pinus patula

Pinaceae

Mexico

Common names: **Eng:** Mexican weeping pine, patula pine, spreading-leaved pine, Tecote pine; **Swah:** msindano.

Ecology: Probably the most widely planted pine tree in tropical Africa. It is tolerant of most soils but does best in acidic soils. While growing best with over 1,000 mm rainfall and at temperatures of 12-20°C, it can grow in more adverse conditions at altitudes of 1,650-3,000 m. In Tanzania it has been grown on large-scale commercial plantations around Kilimanjaro, Usambara, Iringa and Mbeya.

Uses: Firewood, timber (boxes, general purpose), posts (treated with wood preservative), pulpwood, shade, ornamental.

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 three**. **CONES:** female: small hard red spheres, mature in two 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 dust-like pollen. Seeds develop below the cone scales and are released over a long period.

Propagation: Seedlings. Collect seeds by shaking cones in a basket, rub off wings with wet hands and sieve out debris. Dry in the sun.

Seed info.: *No.* of seeds per kg: 110,000-170,000. Seeds germinate in 35-60 days and germination rate is 75-85%.

treatment: not necessary.

storage: seed can be stored for about 6 months at room temperature in air-tight containers, but for several years if cooled.

Management: Fast growing; pruning, thinning for trees being grown for sawn timber. Rotation period for timber is 30-40 years.

Remarks: It represents about 30% of all plantation trees in Tanzania. It should not be grown near crops due to the shallow root system. The timber is easily worked, fairly light and soft, and pale brown in colour.

