

***Podocarpus latifolius* (*P. milanjanus*)**

Podocarpaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Elgeyo:** Serti; **English:** Podo, Red-fruited podo, East African yellow-wood; **Kikuyu:** Muthengera; **Luhya:** Mutarai; **Luo:** Okikacha; **Maasai:** Olpoiripiri; **Marakwet:** Serti; **Meru:** Mubiribiri; **Nandi:** Saptet; **Sabaot:** Sitatet; **Samburu:** Olchani; **Taita:** Maisa; **Tugen:** Septa.

DESCRIPTION: A forest tree to 35 m, **evergreen, conical in shape when young**, the trunk large and buttressed in old trees. **BARK:** Red-brown to grey-brown, narrowly fissured, **peeling in long fibrous strips**. **LEAVES:** Spirally arranged at the tips of branches, **very shiny, curved, tough, to 15 cm**, with a pointed tip, larger and fresh green colour when young. **CONES:** Male trees have **small pinkish catkins with pollen, to 5 cm**; female trees produce **soft fleshy 'fruit' about 1 cm**, ovoid, the thin leathery skin green-purple with a grey bloom. **The receptacle stalk below the fruit is characteristically swollen, soft and red, 1–2 cm**, soon falling ('podocarpus' means 'fruit with a stalk or foot'). **The inner shell is thin and woody** containing 1–2 woody seeds, smaller than those of *P. falcatus*.

ECOLOGY: This tree occurs from central to southern Africa, 900–3,200 m. *P. latifolius* is dominant over *P. falcatus* at higher altitudes and in the more humid highlands. It often dominates the higher subhumid to humid upland forests of Mt Kenya. In Kenya, it grows between 1,500 and 3,350 m, often forming pure stands above 2,600 m, sometimes going into the bamboo zone and associating with bamboo. It does well in Tugen Hills. Agroclimatic Zones I–II.

USES: Firewood, timber (boxes, bakery boards), furniture, poles, medicine (roots), shade, ornamental.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, wildings.

SEED: About 1,900 seeds per kg; germination: 60–80%.

Fresh seeds germinate better. After collection, the red receptacle must be removed. The seeds should not be dried.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: After removal of the receptacle seed can temporarily be stored spread out in the shade for up to 4 days.

Seeds must not be dried (recalcitrant).

MANAGEMENT: Slow growing; coppicing when young (pole size).

REMARKS: This is a beautiful tree when young. It has bright green glossy leaves and a conical shape. It is therefore commonly used as an ornamental. The pale straight-grained timber is easy to work and polish.

