

***Polyscias fulva***

## Araliaceae

**Indigenous**

STANDARD/TRADE NAMES: Mutati.

**COMMON NAMES:** **English:** Parasol tree; **Keiyo:** Auoun; **Kikuyu:** Mutati; **Kipsigis:** Aounet; **Luhya:** Mwanzu; **Luo:** Nyakom ondiok; **Maasai:** Olyalilingi; **Marakwet:** Auoun; **Meru:** Mukurukuru; **Nandi:** Soiyet; **Ogiek:** Muachet; **Sabaot:** Ewondet; **Taita:** Mkanya; **Tugen:** Auwe.

**DESCRIPTION:** A deciduous tree to 25 m with a straight slender bole to approximately 9 m before the development of **whorls of branches, like spokes of an umbrella**. **BARK:** Grey, smooth, leaf scars prominent. **LEAVES:** **Compound, very large, to 1 m, leaflets opposite, to 14 x 8 cm**, base rounded, covered below with **soft golden hairs**. **FLOWERS:** Cream to light yellow, on long spikes. Primary branches to 70 cm long and secondary branches to 7 cm. **FRUIT:** Each fruit small, black, more or less oval, often ribbed, closely clustered, to 6 mm long. Agroclimatic Zones I–II.

**ECOLOGY:** A tall forest tree widely distributed in wetter highland forests into the bamboo zone and southwards to southern Africa, 1,750–2,750 m. Found in the tea-growing areas of Kenya, often left in plantations (Mau, Nandi, Elburgon, Tigoni, Nyambeni, Solai).

**USES:** Firewood, timber, beehives, veneer, plywood, utensils (containers, tea chests), mole traps, medicine (leaves), bee forage, mulch.

**PROPAGATION:** Wildlings, seedlings.

**SEED:** Can be collected from the ground, or collect fruits immediately they turn purple-black by climbing the tree. Let fruit mature in the shade for 1–2 days, then extract by soaking in cold water for 4–6 hours, squeeze out and separate by floating in water, then dry in the shade. About 300,000 seeds per kg; germination rate may be 75% in 35–45 days.

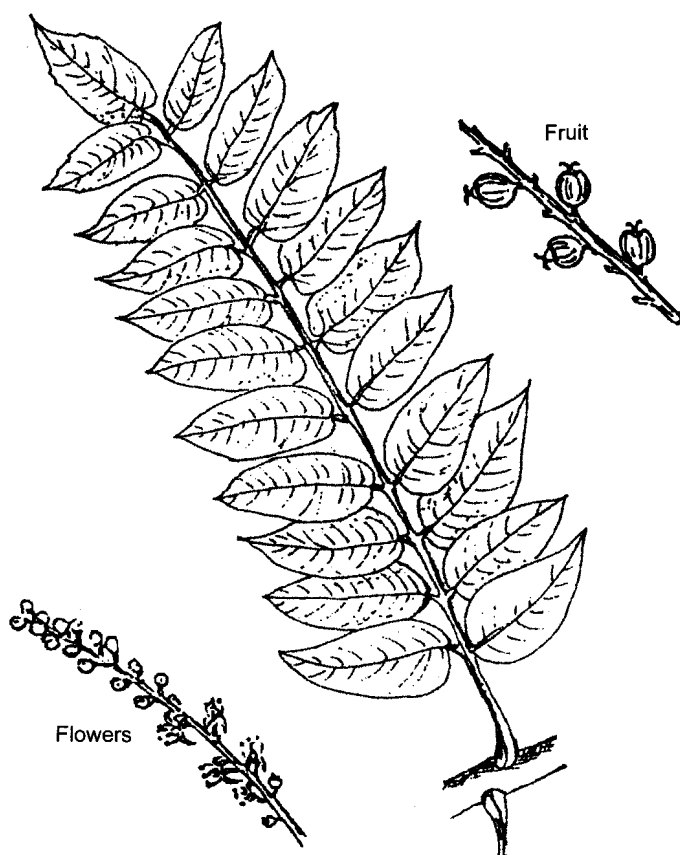
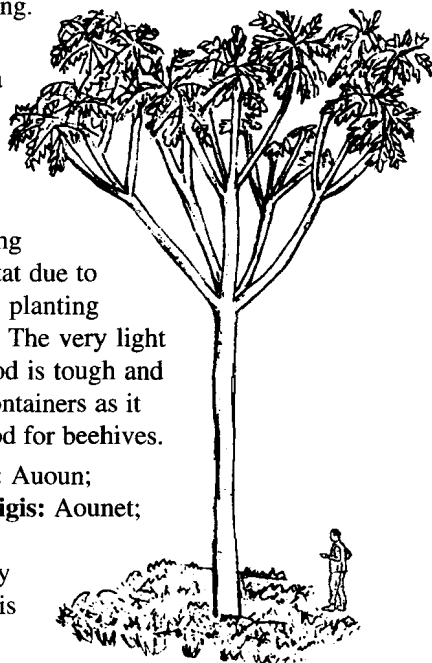
**treatment:** Not necessary, but soaking in cold water may speed up germination.

**storage:** Seed can be stored for long periods.

**MANAGEMENT:** Fast growing.

**REMARKS:** Can be grown with crops, e.g. banana or coffee. The high crown lets in sun-light and the leaves produce good mulch. The species is becoming rare in its natural habitat due to over-exploitation, and planting should be encouraged. The very light soft pale-coloured wood is tough and strong and good for containers as it has no smell. Also good for beehives.

*P. kikuyuensis* (**Keiyo:** Auoun; **Kikuyu:** Mutati; **Kipsigis:** Aounet; **Meru:** Mukurukuru; **Tugen:** Auweis) is very similar to *P. fulva* but is endemic to the central



part of Kenya. Another species is *P. stuhlmannii* var. *stuhlmannii* (**Taita:** Kidongadi) endemic to the Taita Hills and Usambara and Uluguru Mountains in eastern Tanzania. The leaflets are hairless in this species.

**FURTHER READING:** <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm> (*P. fulva*); Albrecht, 1993; Beentje, 1994; Dharani, 2002 (*P. fulva*); Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Katende, 1995 (*P. fulva*); Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989.

