

# Prosopis juliflora

Mimosaceae

Central America, Mexico

**Common names:** **English:** Mesquite.

**Ecology:** A thorny shrub or tree cultivated all over the tropics. It grows well in arid regions, producing deep roots and tolerating sandy, rocky or poor and saline soils. It has only recently been introduced in Uganda and has mainly been tried in Kasese District.

**Uses:** Firewood, charcoal, posts, timber, carving, food (fruit, leaves), fodder (leaves, pods), bee forage, medicine, soil conservation, nitrogen fixation, shade, windbreak, live fence.

**Description:** Often a shrub, but can become a shapely tree to 15 m, though usually 3-5 m. The bole short, young branches smooth green. **BARK:** thick, **rough green-grey**, scaly with age. Some with **pairs of thorns to 5 cm**. **LEAVES:** bipinnate with 2-3 pairs of pinnae, stalks to 6 cm, **leaflets oblong narrow**, 1.5 cm long, no terminal leaflet. **FLOWERS:** gold-yellow, densely crowded in **spikes 5-10 cm, fragrant**. **FRUIT:** **yellow pod, 10-20 cm (more brittle than *P. chilensis*)**, sweeter, darker; 10-20 hard seeds inside, difficult to extract.

**Propagation:** Seedlings, direct sowing on site.

**Seed:** Germination 40-80 %. No. of seeds per kg: 30,000-35,000. Seeds can be extracted by exposing pods to termites or soaking in water.

**treatment:** not necessary.

**storage:** seed stores well both in pods and when extracted as it is not attacked by insects.

**Management:** Fast growing; lopping, pollarding and coppicing.

**Remarks:** Sets seed after 3-4 years. A thorny shrub or tree with a great many variants and closely related species causing some confusion in identification. Unlike *P. chilensis*, young shoots are brown and the tree is better shaped. It also grows faster and competes with crops. The sweet pods contain both glucose and protein so are valuable as fodder. The hard, dense wood burns with great heat. May become a weed, e.g. in irrigation schemes and other wet places in hot areas.

