

Pterocarpus angolensis

Papilionoideae

Indigenous

English: African teak, bloodwood, sealing-wax tree

Nyanja: Mlombe, mlombwa

Senga: Mlombe

Tumbuka: Mlombe

Ecology: One of the most useful and valuable of African timber trees, widespread in central and southern Africa north to Tanzania. It is found all over Zambia in the woodlands as well as in evergreen and deciduous forests. In Eastern Province, it is common between Nyimba and Sinda but also occurs in other areas on the plateau and in the Luangwa Valley, preferring well-drained soils.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, **timber** (construction, quality furniture), poles, medicine (bark, roots, flowers, sap, seeds), **soil improvement**, tannin (bark), dye (sap).

Description: A deciduous tree about 16 m, up to 28 m, with a straight bole and leafy but open crown. **BARK:** grey-black, becoming ridged with deep cracks making rectangular sections. The thick red sap dries in a red mass, hence the English names. **LEAVES:** the tree remains bare June–October. Leaves compound, 5–9 **pairs leaflets plus a central leaflet thin and oval to 7 cm**; shortly stalked. **FLOWERS:** appear before new leaves, August–October; orange-yellow sprays to 20 cm long. **FRUIT:** **unusual round pods with only one seed and a distinctive papery wing**, 3 cm across. The seed case is covered with stiff brown hairs, April–June.

Propagation: Seedlings, cuttings, truncheons.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: 3,400–5,000. Germination is usually 30–70%.

treatment: Crack the hard pod after removing the irritating hairs by light burning or expose the pods to termites. Soak the seed in cold water for 24–48 hours before sowing.

storage: Seed can be stored.

Management: Pruning, coppicing.

Remarks: The tree is fire-resistant. The wood seasons well, without shrinkage, and is termite-resistant. It is one of the most sought-after trees for its attractive and durable timber. The heartwood can be used for boat building. Good specimens of this species are becoming increasingly scarce. The root is believed to cure malaria, blackwater fever and gonorrhoea. The bark is used to treat headaches, mouth sores and rashes.

