

*Ricinodendron rautanenii* (*Schinzlophyton rautanenii*)

## Euphorbiaceae

Indigenous

Nyanja: Mkusu

Senga: Mkusu

**Ecology:** A large tree of central and southern Africa. Found in most parts of Zambia, sometimes in pure stands, also in valley soils such as in the Luangwa Valley, up to 1,200 m. Fruit are eaten by wild game, and elephants like the bark of this tree.

**Uses:** **Timber** (handicrafts, floats, packing cases), food (nut), **oil** (nut), medicine (roots, seed), fodder, string (bark), **live fence**.

**Description:** A deciduous tree, 15–20 m, the main trunk soon dividing into several thick branches, crown heavy and rounded. **BARK: smooth, grey-green, marked with horizontal scars, later** cracked and scaly, yellow-brown, when cut white latex exudes. Branchlets, buds, leafy stalks covered with **red-brown hairs**. **LEAVES:** compound, **5–7 leaflets**, each oval to 10 cm, dark green above, woolly grey hairs below, shortly stalked. Leaves turn yellow before leaf fall from March. Lasting 6–8 months. **FLOWERS:** male and female trees; small cream flowers in sprays to 12 cm, female shorter; September–December, often on the bare tree. **FRUIT: oval to round, about 3 cm**, hairy green-brown. An edible flowery pulp surrounds a very hard nut, edible seed kernel is set free.

**Propagation:** Seedlings, cuttings, truncheons.

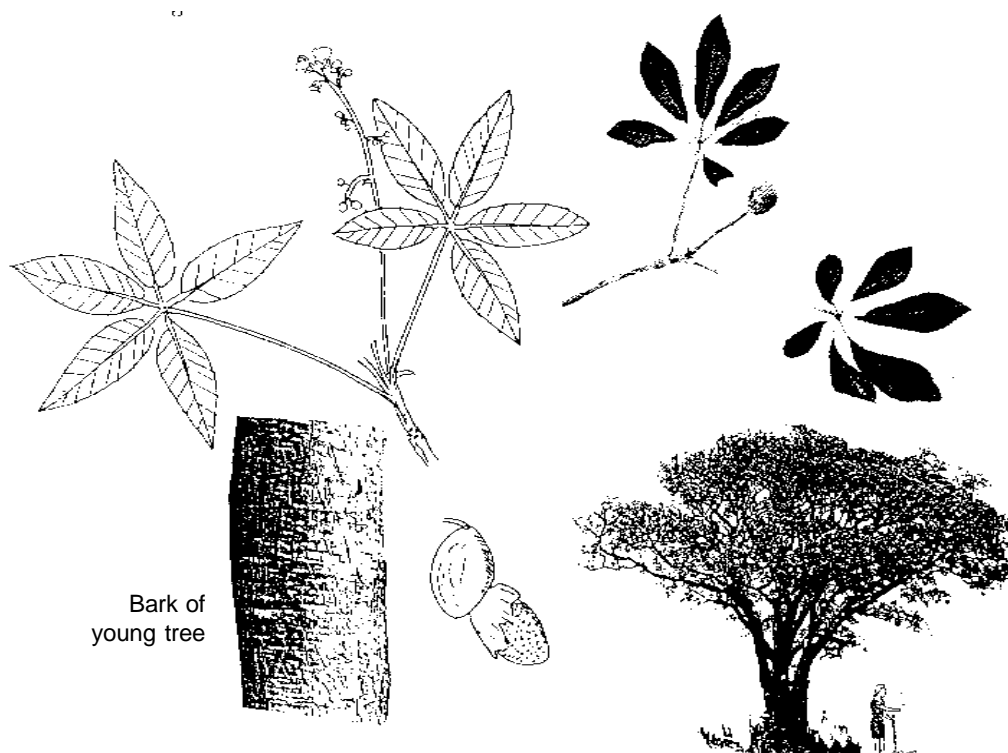
**Seed:** –

**treatment:** Crack the very hard nut, or soak in hot water and allow to cool for 48 hours.

**storage:** Can be stored.

**Management:** Coppicing, prune for a fence.

**Remarks:** The Lozi people of Western Province and the Senga of Chama in Eastern Province use both the flowery pulp and the yellow oil (extracted from seed) in their diet. The seed kernel contains 60% of an oil which is also suitable for paints or varnishes. The cake extract contains 50% protein, but if fed to cows colours the cream yellow. The soft light wood works easily but is not durable. The tree makes a quickly grown live fence.



Bark of young tree