

Indigenous

Common names: Eng: castor-oil plant; Gogo: mnyemba; Hehe: mnyemba; Kinga: imivono; Lugu: mnyemba; Nyam: mhale; Pare: mbono; Samb: mzono; Swah: mbarika, mbono, nyonyo.

Ecology: A shrubby tree growing over a wide range of altitudes preferring humus-rich and disturbed ground. It is termite and drought resistant. It is widely distributed all over Tanzania and has become a weed in some places. It is used as a quick-growing windbreak on contour strips in Arusha.

Uses: Medicine (oil), oil (seeds), live fence, windbreak.

Description: A much-branched evergreen shrub or tree up to 6 m, stems often red, hollow with age, well-marked leaf nodes and scars. LEAVES: large, compound, palmate, to 50 cm across with 5-11 lobes, edge toothed, on a long hollow stalk. Young leaves shiny, soft, dark red-green. FLOWERS: crowded on upright spikes, to 60 cm, male flowers with cream-yellow stamens at the base; female flowers with soft green spines and 3 bright red divided stigmas at the top. FRUIT: round capsules borne in dense clusters with soft spikes; 3-valved, each valve containing one seed.

Propagation: Seedlings, wildings, direct seeding.

Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: about 1,300. Germination very good and fast, about 90% after 3 weeks,

treatment: not necessary.

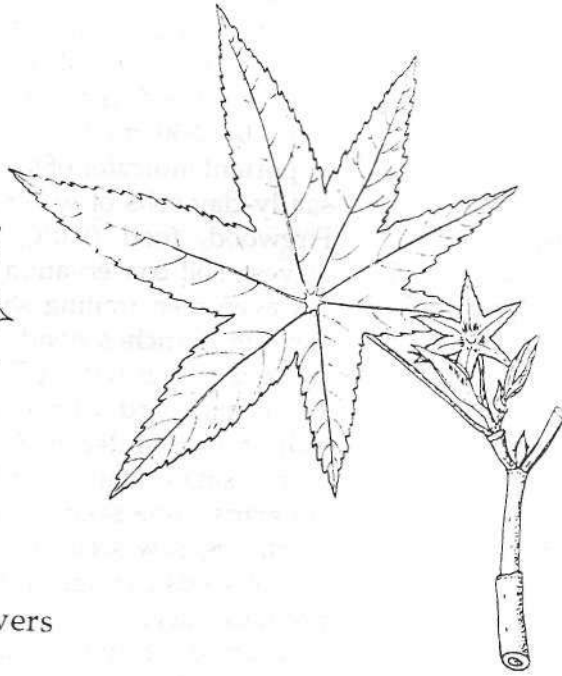
storage: can retain viability up to a year if kept dry.

Management: A fast-growing but short-lived plant. It can be grown as a fallow plant and on croplands.

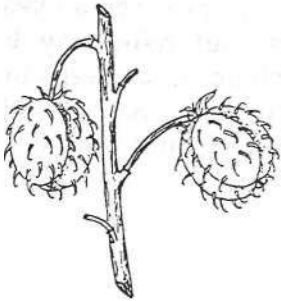
Remarks: The plant is drought and termite resistant. The seed coat and leaves are poisonous to animals and to poultry, and even the oil residue can only be used as stock feed if specially treated. It can be used as fertilizer, however. The seeds yield up to 50% oil, an oil that has many industrial uses. For medicinal purposes the oil extract is heated to neutralize the strong poison, ricin. Even a few seeds can kill if they are chewed—so take care with children. The oil is best used as a body lotion but it was commonly used as a purgative in the Western world before better products replaced it.



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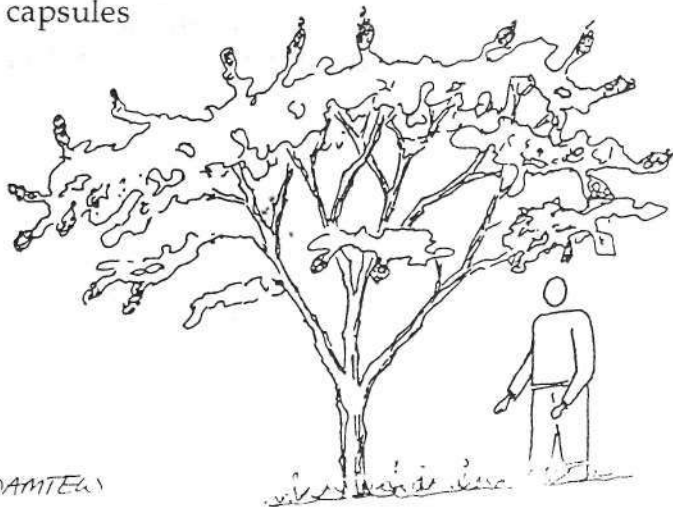


flowers



fruit capsules

seed



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