

Securidaca longepedunculata

Polygalaceae

Indigenous

Eng: *Violet tree*

Tg: *Shotora*

- Ecology:** Widespread in tropical Africa from Ethiopia and East Africa to South Africa occurring in semi-arid savannah and deciduous lowland woodland. In Eritrea, it grows **on** the eastern and western escarpments, 1,500-1,800 m, and is particularly common in Dembelas and Semenawi-bahri.
- Uses:** Poles, **medicine** (roots), fibre (inner bark for ropes), bee forage.
- Description:** A semi-deciduous shrub or small tree 2-6 m, with slender branches to an open crown, sometimes with drooping branchlets. **BARK: Young twigs yellow-green**, becoming stringy and pale; **rough grey mature bark flakes to show yellow below**. Deep fissures when old. **LEAVES:** Alternate, thin and narrow, tip rounded, to 5 cm long, hairy when young, becoming smooth, blue-green, sometimes **clustered on spine-tipped branchlets**. **FLOWERS:** Small, about 1 cm long, **pink or purple**, **sweet scented** in showy sprays with new leaves. **FRUIT: Rounded and winged**, to 4 cm long, purple-green when young, pale yellow-brown when mature, hanging in bunches.
- Propagation:** Seedlings, direct sowing at site. Seeds should be covered with grass and watered until the beginning of the rainy season when they are sown directly at site.
- Seed:** No. of seeds per kg: about 6,000. Seeds germinate with difficulty if not pre-treated.
- treatment:** Soak in cold water for 24 hours.
- storage:** Can retain viability for a long period at room temperature if kept dry.
- Management:** Fairly fast-growing. Grows from root suckers. Seedlings are difficult to plant because of the easily broken taproot.
- Remarks:** This species is becoming rare because of the high demand for the roots for medicinal purposes. The tree is one of the most valuable lowland honey sources and planting is recommended to increase honey production. Poles are reported to be rot- and termite-resistant.

