

Securidaca longipedunculata

Polygalaceae

Indigenous

- Common names: Eng: violet tree; Fiome: furudau; Fipa: mluka, muuruka; Mate: mguluka; Mwera: chiguruka; Nyam: mteyo, mteyu; Nyih: kitwantumbi; Suku: mengo-mengo; Zinza: nengo-nengo.
- Ecology: Widespread in tropical Africa from Kenya to South Africa. In Tanzania it occurs in miombo woodland, bushland and on forest edges from sea level to about 1,600 m. It is most common in coastal forests.
- Uses: Firewood, poles, medicine (all parts), fodder (leaves), *bee* forage, ornamental, fibre (inner bark), oil (flowers, seed), soap (roots).
- 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.
- Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: 36,000-36,500. Seeds germinate with difficulty if not pre-treated. Germination of treated seed good and fairly fast.
- 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.
- Remarks: A beautiful flowering tree with potential as an ornamental in parks and gardens. The wood is pale yellow and has been used for bows. The fibres have been used for fish nets, bead strings and thread to sew barkcloth. The roots contain methyl salicylate and a saponin making them highly poisonous. An antidote for snakebite and a cough mixture are prepared from leaves, an abortifacient from powdered bark and a root infusion relieves toothache. But great care must be taken when using these medicinal substances.

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