

Senna didymobotrya

(*Cassia didymobotrya*)

Fabaceae



Indigenous

Eng: *Candle bush*

Or: *Asene meka*

Ecology

A small bush of montane wooded grassland, evergreen thicket and bushland, often riparian, or in disturbed places. Found in Dry and Moist Kolla and Weyna Dega agroclimatic zones of Arsi, Sidamo, Wolega, Shewa and in the western part of Welo, 1,400–2,400 m.

Uses

Firewood, medicine (leaves, stems, roots), mulch, soil conservation.

Description

An attractive bushy shrub 1–5 m, young stems quite hairy. **LEAVES:** Compound on spreading stalks to 30 cm, without glands, characteristic leafy stipules at the base over 2 cm long, heart-shaped and pointed, 8–18 pairs of oval hairy leaflets to 6 cm long, each with a rounded apex bearing a clear, stiff, hair-like tip. Crushed leaflets have peculiar bitter smell. **FLOWERS:** On erect stalks to 30 cm, in dense clusters, conspicuous as thin shiny brown sepals overlap and cover the rounded buds. Below each bud is a leafy bract. Open flowers at the base of the head have bright yellow petals over 2 cm long, the stamens of 3 sizes with straight stalks. **FRUIT:** Oblong, dark-brown pods, to 12 cm by 2 cm across, flattened with sections across holding the flat seeds. Pods break open when dry.

Propagation

Wildings, seedlings, direct sowing at site.

Seed

Contained in flat pods; collect and crush.

Treatment: Not necessary.

Storage: Store in sealed containers in a cool place.

Management

Remarks

The leaves, pods and roots are poisonous so caution when used as medicine. The bark contains tannin. The leaves can be used as fish poison. Good to grow around the home.



Photo: Patrick Maundu



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