

***Senna siamea* (Cassia siamea)****Fabaceae (Caesalpiaceae)****South East Asia**

**COMMON NAMES:** **English:** Siamese senna; **Kamba:** Ikengeta; **Luo:** Ndek owinu, Mbengo.

**DESCRIPTION:** An evergreen tree to 20 m. **BARK:** Smooth, pale grey-brown. **LEAVES:** Compound, stalk to 30 cm, grooved, leaflets oblong, 4–16 pairs, round at base and tip, which may be notched, dark, shiny green above. **FLOWERS:** Pale yellow in dense heads, each flower about 3 cm across. **FRUIT:** Pods in dense clusters, flat yellow-brown and smooth, slightly curved, indented across. About 20 seeds in each pod.

**ECOLOGY:** A small tree cultivated all over the tropics from subhumid to semi-arid and even arid zones. Prefers a high water table, but will tolerate extended drought; 0–1,800 m. Common at the coast and lower altitude areas in Kenya. Tolerates a variety of soils although not salinity. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV.

**USES:** Firewood, charcoal, timber, furniture, poles, medicine (roots and bark), bee forage, shade, ornamental, mulch, soil conservation, windbreak, tannin, dye.

**PROPAGATION:** Seedling, wildings, direct sowing at site.

**SEED:** This tree is a prolific seeder; 38,000–45,000 seeds per kg.

**treatment:** Stored seed: Pour hot water on seed, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours. Fresh seed requires no pretreatment. Seed should be sown in areas with full sunlight as the slightest shade reduces germination.

**storage:** Seed can be stored for up to 3 years in airtight containers. but germination rate drops with time.

**MANAGEMENT:** Fast growing; lopping, coppicing, pruning for compatibility with crops.

**REMARKS:** An earlier name of this species was *Cassia siamea*. The tree is not preferred by livestock and so is easy to establish. Foliage is poisonous to pigs but not to cattle or sheep. Termite resistant. Drought resistant, although there may be dieback during severe drought; but the tree usually recovers when there is rain. Susceptible to mildew attack on the leaves. May conserve soil but competes with crops.

**FURTHER READING:** <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Dharani, 2002; Katende et al., 1995; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Storrs, 1979.

