

Senna siamea (Cassia siamea)

Caesalpinioideae

South-East Asia

- Common names: Eng: iron wood, yellow cassia; **Suku:** nsongoma; **Swah:** mjohoro.
- Ecology: A small tree cultivated all over the tropics from sub-humid to semi-arid and even arid zones, 0-1,600 m. It prefers a high watertable but will tolerate extended drought and a variety of soils. In Tanzania *Cassia siamea* is widely grown in drier areas below 1,000 m. The most suitable soils are deep, fairly fertile, well drained and neutral or alkaline.
- Uses: Firewood, charcoal, poles, timber (furniture), medicine, fodder (leaves), bee forage, ornamental, mulch, soil conservation, windbreak.
- Description: An evergreen tree to 20 m, often shrub like. **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 within.
- Propagation: Direct sowing, seedlings, wildings.
- Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: 39,000. A prolific seeder.
- treatment: fresh seeds require no pre-treatment; nick or soak stored seeds up to 48 hours in cold water or pour on boiling water and leave to soak for 24 hours.
- storage: seed can be stored up to one year but germination rate drops with time.
- Management: Fast growing; lopping, coppicing.
- Remarks: The most widely planted fuel tree in the lowlands of Tanzania, with dense wood, but it gives a smoky fire. The species is not browsed so it is easily established. Should not be mixed with crops as it competes. Susceptible to mildew attacks on the leaves. In Tanzania *Senna siamea* is recommended as a woodlot tree where conditions are favourable.

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