

Senna spectabilis (*Cassia spectabilis*)

Fabaceae (Caesalpinaceae)

Tropical America

COMMON NAMES: Kikuyu: Muchingiri; Swahili: Mhomba; Teso: Igasha.

DESCRIPTION: A deciduous tree with a rounded crown, usually less than 10 m tall but occasionally to 20 m. The bole is short and tends to fork near the ground. The tree is bare for several months of the year. **BARK:** Smooth, grey with horizontal markings. **LEAVES:** Compound to 40 cm, with **many pointed leaflets**, often softly hairy below. **FLOWERS:** Golden yellow in erect pyramid clusters to 60 cm high, all over the tree. **FRUIT:** Long cylindrical or flattened pods, turning from green to black, the seeds in separate compartments.

ECOLOGY: One of several exotic *Senna* spp. introduced to Africa. It grows well on deep, moist sandy loam but will even grow on black-cotton soil if the site is not too dry. Planted up to 2,000 m altitude. Agroclimatic Zones II–IV. Flowers in April–June and seeds in July–August in Nairobi. Seeds collected in December at the coast.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, wood for crates, poles, tool handles, bee forage, shade, ornamental, mulch, wind-break.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, direct sowing at site.

SEED: Seeds profusely; 38,000–40,000 seeds per kg.

treatment: Pour boiling water over seed, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods.

MANAGEMENT: Fast growing on good sites, slow on drier sites; coppicing.

REMARKS: The wood is termite resistant. Easy to raise, less susceptible to pests and diseases and more drought resistant than *S. siamea*. The coppicing ability is very good and trees more than 50 years old are still coppicing.

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

