

# Senna spectabilis (Cassia spectabilis)

Caesalpinaceae

Tropical America

**Common names:** **English:** Cassia.

**Ecology:** This tree is native to central and northern South America. It has been introduced in Africa as an ornamental. *Cassia spectabilis* is tolerant of cool conditions (15-25°C) and therefore suitable for elevations up to 2,000 m. Will grow well with a mean annual rainfall of 800-1,000 mm in deep, moist, sandy or loamy soils. In Uganda it is widely cultivated as a boundary marker and in woodlots, especially in Central and Western Regions.

**Uses:** Firewood, charcoal, tool handles, bee forage, shade, ornamental, mulch.

**Description:** A small rounded deciduous tree generally less than 10 m tall. The bole is short and tends to fork near the ground. Bare for several months. **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.

**Propagation:** Direct sowing at site, seedlings.

**Seed:** No. of seeds per kg: about 39,000. Seeds profusely,  
**treatment:** immerse seed in boiling water, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours.

**storage:** under cool and dry conditions the seed can be stored for up to two years.

**Management:** Fast growing on good sites and slow in dry sites; coppicing.

**Remarks:** The wood is termite resistant. Easy to raise and less susceptible to pests and diseases than *Senna siamea*. The coppicing ability is very good. Trees more than 50 years old are still coppicing. Every rural home in areas where the species performs well ought to have at least ten trees growing on their land to meet the domestic demand for fuel.

*Senna spectabilis* (*Cassia spectabilis*)

*Caesalpinaceae*

