

***Sesbania bispinosa***

Fabaceae (Papilionaceae)

**Indigenous or from India**

**COMMON NAMES:** Digo: Murindaziya; **English:** Prickly sesbania; **Swahili:** Mrindazia.

**DESCRIPTION:** A woody herb, tall and straight, often unbranched, in crowded stands, 6 m high, otherwise low and spreading, multi-stemmed. **Stems, leaf and flower stalks prickly.** **LEAVES:** Compound, with up to 30 pairs leaflets, each 1 cm. **FLOWERS:** Yellow, 9–12 on a short stalk, the largest petal spotted green outside, marked violet inside. **FRUIT:** Very long narrow pods, about 25 cm, curved and beaked with 35–40 brown seeds.

**ECOLOGY:** Occurs throughout eastern Africa extending to South Africa and east to China, though it may have been introduced in much of its range. Naturally mostly found in low-lying wet areas of Kenya, especially at the coast and in lower Tana, sometimes as a weed in rice fields. Commonly grown near homesteads in parts of western Kenya, 0–1,850 m. It tolerates difficult sites such as alkaline, waterlogged soils and rice paddies. Requires moisture to grow fast. Agroclimatic Zones II–III.

**USES:** Firewood (low quality), poles (short durability), medicine, fodder (leaves), shade, mulch, green manure, nitrogen-fixing, soil conservation, soil improvement, windbreak, fibre (stem), resin.

**PROPAGATION:** Direct sowing at site.

**SEED:** If sown as a sole crop for green manure, about 90–100 kg seed is required per hectare when broadcast or 20–60 kg when drilled in rows.

**treatment:** Not necessary.

**storage:** Seeds can be stored for long periods, but best germination is from fresh seed. Dry seeds well before storage.

**MANAGEMENT:** Very fast growing; lopping, pruning, short rotations.

**REMARKS:** A fast-growing short-lived plant with vigorous nodulation and good ability to fix nitrogen. Poor-quality firewood due to the hollow stems. The stem yields a strong fibre that is especially durable under water. It can stand a wide range of temperatures and difficult soils and is highly resistant to drought. The foliage turned into the soil as green manure has been shown to increase crop yields.

**FURTHER READING:** <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Beentje, 1994; Katende et al., 1995; National Academy of Sciences, 1979, 1980.

