

Sesbania sesban**Fabaceae (Papilionaceae)****Indigenous**

COMMON NAMES: **Boran:** Daisa; **English:** Sesbania, River bean, Egyptian rattle pod; **Giriama:** Kinuka muhondo; **Kamba:** Munyongo; **Keiyo:** Natiatia; **Kikuyu:** Mweithia; **Kisii:** Omosabisabi; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Chisubasubi; **Luhya:** Kumusubasubi, Lukhule; **Luo:** Oyioko (Siaya), Sawo sawo; **Maasai:** Oloiyanalani; **Nandi:** Walbaiyondet; **Samburu:** Loiyangalani.

DESCRIPTION: A deciduous, short-lived shrub or tree to 8 m. **BARK:** Red-brown, young shoots hairy. **LEAVES:** Compound to 12 cm long, 10–25 pairs leaflets, each leaflet to 2 cm, **oblong, tip notched, narrow.** **FLOWERS:** **Pale yellow, speckled maroon,** in few-flowered sprays to 15 cm long. **FRUIT:** Abundant bunches of thin **pale brown pods to 20 cm,** with separated sections so **seeds rattle within.**

ECOLOGY: One of many useful African *Sesbania* spp. that survive waterlogging and fix nitrogen. Naturally distributed from Senegal to Somalia and south to South Africa. Cultivated throughout tropical Africa and Asia. In Kenya, it is found at the margin of freshwater lakes like Naivasha and Baringo and in seasonal ponds. It tolerates acid and saline soil. Common in riverine vegetation. May occur in dense stands. Widely cultivated in western Kenya; 350–1,900 m. Agroclimatic Zones I–IV. Seeds in November–December in Nairobi.

USES: Firewood, poles, medicine (leaves and roots), fodder, shade, nitrogen-fixing, soil conservation (improved fallows), fibre, veterinary medicine, soap (leaves).

PROPAGATION: Direct sowing at site, wildings.

SEED: The species is a prolific seeder with a germination rate of about 80%; 85,000–110,000 seeds per kg.

treatment: Not necessary for fresh seed, soak stored seed in cold or tepid water for 24 hours before sowing.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods, but it is best to germinate from fresh seed.

MANAGEMENT: Very fast growing; pruning, short rotation.

REMARKS: The species harbours rootknot nematodes and should therefore be avoided in combination with crops that are very sensitive to nematodes like banana and Irish potatoes. The leaf mulch and nitrogen-fixation features make this tree of great potential for soil improvement on small farms. Widely used in western Kenya.

