

Sterculia africana

Sterculiaceae

Indigenous

Ar: Terter

Bl: Darsel

Nr: Alebo

Eng: Egyptian plane tree, large-leaved star chestnut, large-leaved sterculia

Tg: Darile

Tr: Harinke, Darsel

Ecology: A common tree of central and southern Africa in hot dry areas at medium to low altitudes occurring in most types of woodlands. It occasionally grows on termite mounds. In Eritrea, it grows around Tinkulehas and Begu, 0-1,400 m.

Uses: **Timber** (heavy construction, furniture), medicine (bark, leaves), ornamental, gum, **rope** (bark), mats (bark fibres), live fence.

Description: A deciduous tree with a thick, fluted trunk, usually 5-12 m but may reach 25 m, the erect branches spreading to a rounded crown. Branches soft and brittle. **BARK: Smooth, often shiny white**, later flaking irregularly into patches to reveal a beautiful purple-green-white-brown underbark. **LEAVES:** Crowded at the tips of branches, **deeply divided with 3-5 lobes**, over 10 cm across, on a **stalk to 10 cm, lobes pointed**. **FLOWERS:** Appear on the bare tree, sexes separate on the same tree, in branched heads to 9 cm, **green-yellow sepals** (no petals) joined together, **2.5 cm across with red honey-guide lines within**. **FRUIT: 1-5 woody beaked sections**, boat-shaped, with short yellow hairs. One side only breaks open to free 3-10 flat, **blue-grey seeds** which hang like ticks around the open edge.

Propagation: Seedlings, cuttings, truncheons (large woody cuttings).

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: 24,000-28,000. Germination is up to 65% after 20 days.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Can retain viability for up to 2 months at room temperature.

Management: Pruning, coppicing.

Remarks: The hairs of the fruit irritate skin, but the fruit has been added to snuff to improve the flavour.

4

