

Syzygium cordatum

Myrtaceae

Indigenous

English: Waterberry tree

Nyanja: Msinyika, mchisu

Ecology: A waterside tree found in East and Central Africa, south to Natal. The tree is found all over Zambia; locally frequent around wet dambos and on anthills. Usually seen along river banks in Eastern Province.

Uses: **Timber** (construction, furniture), **food** (fruit), medicine (leaves, bark, roots), **bee forage**, dye (bark).

Description: A medium-sized evergreen tree, usually 8–15 m. The trunk short and thick, occasionally buttressed, branching to a heavy rounded crown. **BARK:** grey to dark brown, deeply cracked, often breaking into small squares. **Branchlets** square in section, **edges winged**. **LEAVES:** very many, near ends of branches, **clasp the stem** in opposite pairs, the **next leaf pair at right angles**, leathery, blue-green, **oblong to circular**, to 8 cm long, **leaf base heart-shaped** (cordatum). **FLOWERS:** dense, branched clusters to 10 cm across, sweet-scented with much nectar, white-pink, July–November. **FRUIT:** abundant, deep purple when ripe, oval, to 1.5 cm, edible but acid with 1 seed, November–March.

Propagation: Seedlings, direct seeding.

Seed: Germination is good but takes up to 25 days. No. of seeds per kg: 400–450.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Avoid storage.

Management: Coppicing, pollarding.

Remarks: The pink-brown timber is hard and strong, saws and works easily, and is moderately borer-proof. The pleasant aromatic smoke from the burning wood is used to season milk gourds. An infusion of the leaves has a purgative action.

