

Syzygium cumini

Myrtaceae

India, Tropical Asia

COMMON NAMES: **Digo:** Mzambarau; **English:** Jambolan, Java plum; **Giriama:** Mzambarau, Zambarau; **Luo:** Jamna; **Sanya:** Mzambarau; **Swahili:** Mzambarau; **Teso:** Eme.

DESCRIPTION: A large tree to 30 m, though usually 15–18 m. The crown is well branched with dense, heavy foliage. **BARK:** Dark and rough on the bole, smooth and paler on the younger branches. **LEAVES:** Opposite, large and oval, to 20 cm, **smooth and shiny, with a distinct pointed tip, strongly aromatic if crushed.** Young leaves reddish. **FLOWERS:** Green-white, about 1.5 cm across, in clusters below leaves. **Flower branchlets very symmetric, at right angles.** **FRUIT:** **Fleshy purplish berry,** about 2.5 cm long and up to 2 cm in diameter. Sweet, but the juice dries the mouth.

ECOLOGY: A large tree, native to Burma, India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and the Malay peninsula, introduced to many other tropical countries and even into the subtropics, e.g. Australia and Florida. In Kenya, a well-known ornamental evergreen tree long planted in Mombasa and other humid lowland areas where it has become naturalized, 0–1,800 m. The tree grows best with rainfall over 1,000 mm annually and in well-drained soils, although it can tolerate waterlogging. Agroclimatic Zones II–IV.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber, furniture, poles, tool handles, boat building, edible fruit, medicine, fodder (leaves), bee forage, shade, ornamental, dune fixation, windbreak, tannin, dye.

PROPAGATION: Very suitable for direct sowing at site, seedlings (sow seeds in pots). Natural regeneration is profuse around mother trees as seeds fall in large quantities. Can be grafted for best varieties. Each fruit produces 1–5 seedlings.

SEED: About 500 seeds per kg. Use fresh seeds. Germination takes 1–2 weeks and is good with fresh seeds.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Seed cannot be stored (recalcitrant) and should not be dried, but remove flesh and wash before sowing.

MANAGEMENT: Lopping, pollarding, pruning, coppicing.

Fairly fast growing, seedlings may reach 4 m in only 2 years. Tolerates shade when young.

REMARKS: Honey produced from the flowers tastes very bitter. Its fruit is well liked and sold in markets. The charcoal made from the wood is excellent. In some areas jambolan has become one of the major cheap fruits. Planting for shade and fruit should be encouraged. Selected good clones are frequently propagated in Java and Florida.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Beentje, 1994; Dharani, 2002; Jensen, 1999; Katende et al., 1995; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; National Academy of Sciences, 1980, 1983; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Verheij and Coronel, 1991.

