

Syzygium guineense

Myrtaceae

Indigenous

English: Woodland waterberry**Nyanja:** Katope**Senga:** Katope**Tumbuka:** Katope

Ecology: A common tree of river banks; but will also grow in open woodlands, all over Africa north to Ethiopia and south to South Africa, 0–1,800 m. In Zambia, there are 4 subspecies, but in Eastern Province ssp. *guineense* and *huillense* are the most common. The latter is small and bushy; found mostly in dambo margins and wet grasslands. As the trees hybridize easily, detailed characteristics vary considerably.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, **timber** (furniture, general construction, tool handles, carving), **poles, food** (fruit), medicine (bark, roots, leaves), fodder (fruit), **bee forage**, dyes, tannin (bark).

Description: A leafy evergreen tree, usually 10–15 m, but may reach 25 m in the most favourable conditions. The trunk sometimes buttressed, crown irregular to rounded, branchlets drooping. **BARK:** smooth, grey-brown, black and rough with age, exudes a watery red sap if cut. **LEAVES:** opposite, to 12 cm, shiny dark green but young leaves purple-red, oval, and **narrowing to the base, stalked**. The leaf edge may be rolled under. **FLOWERS:** in branched heads 10 cm across, white and fragrant, the **stalks somewhat square**, August–October. **FRUIT:** oblong to 3 cm, shiny **purple-black, in big bunches of 20–30**, one stony seed; very attractive to birds, October–January.

Propagation: Seedlings, wildings, direct seeding.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: 400–500. Good germination, 85%.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Avoid storage.

Management: Pollarding, coppicing.

Remarks: The wood is brown, hard and strong. It is easily worked but liable to split. The fruit is liked by children. It is also used to treat dysentery. The bark is used to treat diarrhoea.

