

Tamarindus indica

Caesalpinioideae

Indigenous

Common names: **Bende:** mshishi, msisi; **Bond:** mkwazu; **Chag:** moya; Eng: tamarind; **Hehe:** msisi; **Lugu:** mdai; **Maasai:** olmasambrai, masamburai; **Nyam:** msisi; **Nyat:** mkwaju; **Samb:** nshishi; **Suku:** bushishi; **Swah:** mkwaju; **Zara:** mkwesu; **Zinza:** msisa.

Ecology: Indigenous to tropical Africa; now so widely planted that its area of origin is hard to determine. It is found widely in the Sahel, South-East Asia, the Caribbean and Central America. It is a very adaptable species and drought hardy, preferring semi-arid woodlands and wooded grasslands. It tolerates salty, coastal winds, even monsoon climates, 0-1,500 m altitude. It grows in most soils, but prefers well-drained deep alluvial soil; often riverine in very dry areas. A long, well-marked dry season seems necessary for fruiting. It is widespread in Tanzania, most abundant in woodland and thorn bush.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, timber (furniture, boat building), utensils (pestles, mortars), poles, posts, food (pulp, drink), flavouring (fruit), medicine (twigs, bark, roots), fodder (leaves, fruit), ornamental, mulch, shade.

Description: A large tree to 30 m with an **extensive dense crown**. The short bole can be 1 m in diameter. Evergreen or deciduous in dry areas. **BARK:** rough, grey, flaking. **LEAVES:** compound on hairy stalks to 15 cm, 10-18 pairs leaflets, **dull green to 3 cm, round at the tip and base**, veins raised. **FLOWERS:** buds red, petals gold with red veins, in small bunches. **FRUIT:** pale brown, **sausage-like**, hairy pods, about 10 cm, cracking when mature to show **sticky, brown pulp around 1-10 dark brown angular seeds**.

Propagation: Seedlings, wildings, direct sowing.

Seed **info.:** No. of seeds per kg: 1,400-2,700. Germination rate about 90% in 40-50 days.

treatment: collect pods from the tree as soon as mature. Soak these pods for 24 hours, then rub on wire mesh to remove pulp. Separate heavy good seed by floating in water. Dry in the sun. Nick or soak the seed in cold water for 12 hours, seed can be stored for more than two years.

storage:

Management: Slow growing; pollarding, coppicing.

Remarks: Grows in fertile to poor soils from high-rainfall areas to semi-arid ones. The dark brown heartwood is hard and heavy, well grained and easy to polish. The fruit pulp is rich in vitamin C.

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