

Tamarindus indica

Caesalpinioideae

Indigenous

English: Tamarind
Kunda: Mwembe
Nyanja: Mwemba
Senga: Wembembe

Ecology: A well-known African tree from West to East Africa and south to South Africa. It is a very adaptable species but prefers semi-arid areas, 0–1500 m. It has been planted in gardens and at roadsides in many tropical countries and is drought-resistant once the deep roots are established. In Zambia, it is very common in the Zambezi and Luangwa Valleys on river banks and on anthills. Elsewhere, it is only found around lakes Tanganyika and Mweru.

Uses: Firewood, **charcoal**, **timber** (furniture, boats, general purposes), poles, **food** (fruit, pulp for drink, spice), medicine (bark, leaves, roots, fruit), fodder (leaves, fruit), bee forage, **shade**, ornamental, windbreak, tannin (bark).

Description: A large semi-evergreen tree to 30 m with a **heavy, dense crown**, a short trunk and drooping branches. **BARK:** pale grey-brown, flaking into rounded scales. **LEAVES:** compound, on a stalk to 15 cm, **10–18 pairs dull green** leaflets each one **oblong, rounded to 3 cm**. **FLOWERS:** small, yellow with red veins in small groups, October–February. **FRUIT:** pale brown, **sausage-like, hairy pods to 18 cm**, when dry they crack open showing sticky brown pulp around **brown-black, angular seeds**. July–November.

Propagation: Seedlings, wildings, direct seeding.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: 1,400–2,600.

treatment: Germination rate about 90%. Soak seed in hot water and allow to cool for 24–48 hours.

storage: Seed can be stored for more than 2 years.

Management: Pollarding, coppicing.

Remarks: The dark brown heartwood is tough and well grained. It can make very good charcoal. The fruit pulp is used to make a refreshing drink and the pulp is also mixed with porridge. This fruit pulp is very rich in vitamin C. It has potential in drier areas although it is slow growing.

