

Terminalia sericea

Combretaceae

Indigenous

English: Silver terminalia

Nyanja: Gonondo

Senga: Mupululu

Ecology: This is a typical tree of the extensive savannah woodlands of central and southern Africa, north to Tanzania and south to South Africa, 450–1,300 m. It may be a dominant tree or a co-dominant in mopane woodland, often in sandy soils.

Uses: **Timber** (tool handles, construction, furniture), **poles, fence posts**, medicine (roots), dye (bark), rope (bark).

Description: A deciduous tree 3–16 m with spreading wavy branches to a light round or flat crown. **BARK:** pale cream to grey-brown-black, with wide angular grooves. Branchlets with characteristic purplish bark peeling off in strips to show paler bark below. **LEAVES:** **crowded all around the end of the branchlet**, leathery, oval but narrowed to the base, up to 12 cm long, with clear side veins. Below there are **silky white hairs** (sericea), hence the English name. Young leaves are pink and dying leaves deep pink before they fall. **FLOWERS:** September–November; appearing with new leaves, in short spikes about 5 cm, green-white, buds silky hairy. **FRUIT:** **pink-purple-brown to 4 cm long**, oval and flat, **winged around the central seed, tip notched**, December–April.

Propagation: Seedlings, rootsuckers.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: $\pm 1,200$. Germination good with fresh seed.

treatment: Remove wing before sowing.

storage: Seed can be stored if kept dry. Viability is up to 3 years.

Management: Pollarding, coppicing.

Remarks: The hard yellow wood is resistant to both termites and borers and is a useful general purpose wood. In Eastern Province, the timber is used to make axles for ox-drawn wagons (*ngolo*). Posts both for fences and houses last a long time and are generally insect-resistant. The tree can be used for land reclamation. The root is used to treat diarrhoea, pneumonia, bilharzia and colic and the leaves to treat stomach disorders.

