

***Thespesia garckeana* (*Azanza garckeana*)**

Malvaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **English:** Azanza, Tree hibiscus, Snot apple;
Kamba: Mutoo, Madoo (fruit); **Mbeere:** Mutoo; **Swahili:** Muwatata, Mtoho, Nduwe.

DESCRIPTION: A semi-deciduous shrubby tree, 3–10 m, with a leafy rounded crown. **BARK:** Dark brown, rough, branchlets with woolly hairs. **LEAVES:** **Distinctively rounded, up to 20 x 20 cm, usually 8 x 12 cm, on long stalks up to 13 cm, 3–5 lobes**, rough brown hairs above, soft below. **FLOWERS:** Showy, **yellow with a purple-brown centre**, petals overlap and do not open. **FRUIT:** **Rounded and woody, 2–8 cm wide**, yellow to brown-green when mature, opens into 4–5 sections. Sweet and edible, contains 15–30 light brown woolly seeds.

ECOLOGY: A species of eastern and southern Africa from Sudan south to South Africa. In Kenya, a common shrub in southern districts of Eastern Province and also eastern parts of Central Province in wooded grassland and open bushland. Very common in Machakos and Kitui Districts in open bushland and woodland. Common also in *Combretum–Terminalia* bushland, 500–1,500 m. Thrives in sandy or red clay with rainfall 600–800 mm. Agroclimatic Zones III–V. Flowers in November–December in Kitui; young fruits in May in Machakos and Kitui.

USES: Firewood, furniture, poles, tool handles, utensils, yokes for oxen, carvings, food (edible fruit), medicine (roots and leaves), fodder, bee forage, shade, ornamental, mulch, green manure, fibre (inner bark).

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, truncheons (large woody cuttings at least 80 mm in diameter). Produces root suckers.

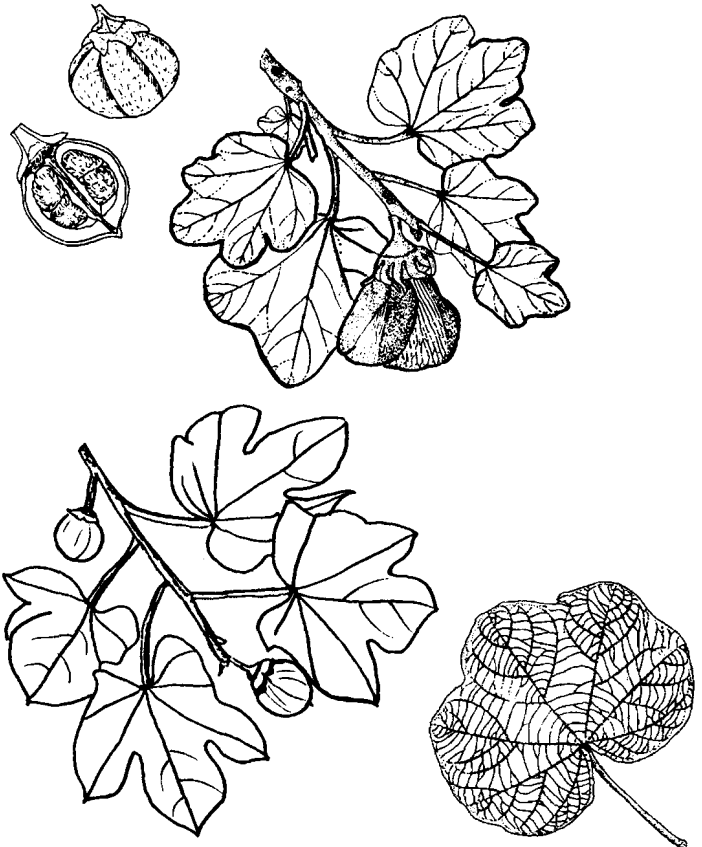
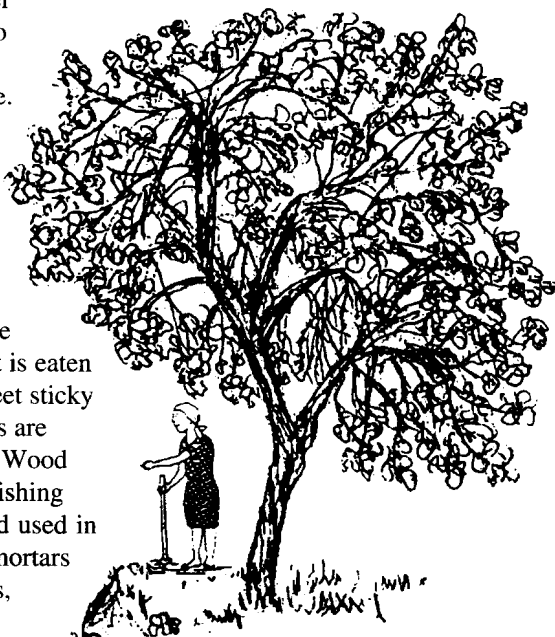
SEED: About 4,000 seeds per kg.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Dry seeds store well at cool temperatures.

MANAGEMENT: Fairly fast growing (up to 60 cm per year in warm areas); pruning, coppicing. Planted in cropland as well as near homes as an ornamental. Not shade tolerant. Prune lower branches to give it a good shape. Using root suckers is the easiest way to multiply the plant.

REMARKS: The whole fruit is eaten for the sweet sticky flesh; seeds are discarded. Wood strong, finishing smooth and used in carvings, mortars and pestles,



wooden spoons, yokes, handles for axes and in the construction of traditional tables. The centre poles in huts are usually of this tree (Kitui). The heartwood is said to be very hard and resistant to attack by termites and other insects. Host of cotton stainers and other bugs, therefore not to be grown in cotton-producing areas.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Beentje, 1994; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Storrs, 1979.

