

Toona ciliata

Meliaceae

Tropical Asia, Southern China, Himalayas

COMMON NAMES: English: Toon tree.

DESCRIPTION: A semi-evergreen tree, usually 10 m but may reach 21 m, with **large branches** to a spreading crown. **BARK:** Grey-brown, rough and cracking into squares. **LEAVES:** Compound, very long, up to 90 cm, with 10–14 pairs of leaflets, narrow leaflets up to 15 cm long, **often unequal-sided**, tapering to a fine tip, smell of onions when crushed. **FLOWERS:** Very small, white, **bell-shaped, in inconspicuous sprays**. **FRUIT:** **Brown capsules, split open into dark brown star shapes** releasing small winged seeds.

ECOLOGY: Toon originates from tropical Asia. In Kenya, it grows on a variety of sites, but it prefers well-drained soils. It is competitive with other trees as well as with crops. Sets seeds easily and is naturalized, 0–1,800 m. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber (joinery, light construction, boxes, carts), furniture, flooring, veneer, boat building, medicine (bark, leaves), shade, ornamental, windbreak, dye (flowers), insect repellent (bark extract).

PROPAGATION: Direct sowing at site, wildings, seedlings. Produces root suckers if roots are disturbed.

SEED: Toon is a prolific seeder. In season, the seeds lie on the ground like termite wings and are easy to collect. No. of seeds per kg 300,000–380,000; germination rate 40–80%.

treatment: Not necessary, but must sow seed with wing up.

storage: Seed can be stored in airtight containers if kept cool, but lose viability within 3 months at room temperature. Best to use fresh seed.

MANAGEMENT: Fast growing; coppicing, pollarding.

REMARKS: The plant is very aggressive and invasive and is not suitable for planting in gardens or near food crops because of its shallow and aggressive root system. The

red wood is soft, light and moderately durable. The tree can withstand drought if well established.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Katende et al., 1995; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Storrs, 1979.

