

Trema orientalis (T. guineensis)

Ulmaceae

Indigenous

Common names: Arusha: ol matata; Chag: mshinga, mwesii, mwezi; Eng: pigeon wood; Haya: omuhuwe, muuwe; Iraqw: slarakahe; Kere: omuhohwe; Lugu: mbefu; Mate: mpeho; Mbug: lushinga; Meru: mwefu; Nyak: mpehwe; Pare: mwesu; Samb: mshinda, mshinga; Suku: mohowe; Swah: mgendagenda; Zara: mpehe, mshanulo; Zigua: boriti, mpera, mshinga.

Ecology: A small, short-lived tree, widely distributed in Asia and Africa from Senegal and the Sudan to the Cape in higher-rainfall areas, 0-2,000 m. It is found in riverine forest or forest margins as a pioneer which quickly invades clearings and disturbed soils.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, poles, fodder (leaves, pods, seeds), bee forage, shade, ornamental, mulch, nitrogen fixation, soil conservation, soil improvement, black dye (bark), brown dye (leaves), oil (seed).

Description: A shrub or much branched tree to 12 m. BARK: light grey smooth, branchlets hairy. LEAVES: alternate along drooping branchlets, to 14 cm long, rough and dull above, hairy below, the edge finely toothed all round, the blade unequal sided. FLOWERS: small, yellow-green, separate male and female flowers. FRUIT: small, round and flesh) black when ripe, 4-6 mm, containing one black seed in green flesh.

Propagation: Seedlings, cuttings.

Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: 370,000. Germination rate is about 30%.

treatment:

storage: can retain viability for a few months.

Management: Very fast growing; coppicing.

Remarks: A host tree for many butterflies and the fruit are eaten by birds, the main agents of distribution. It is a very fast-growing tree but the timber is poor. It does not compete with crops. Medicine from the leaves is reported to be an antidote to poison in general. Both bark and leaves contain a saponin, a tannin and sugar and have been used for deworming and as cough medicine.

