

Trichilia emetica

Meliaceae

Indigenous

English: Cape mahogany**Nyanja:** Msikizi**Senga:** Msikizi

Ecology: A large timber tree, found throughout tropical Africa even into Yemen and south to South Africa, 0–1,800 m. It grows in most parts of Zambia and is locally frequent in wetter areas along rivers, in swamp forest and on escarpment miombo. It has been planted as an ornamental. Prefers well-drained rich soil and high groundwater.

Uses: Firewood, **timber** (furniture, tool handles, boats), poles, medicine (leaves, bark, oil), **shade**, ornamental, **windbreak**, oil, soap, cosmetics (seed).

Description: An evergreen tree, 15–30 m high, with dark hanging foliage, pyramid shaped when young. Later the crown is well rounded and heavy; the trunk rather smooth, swollen or fluted when old. **BARK:** grey-red-brown rather smooth with fine shallow grooves, later cracking into small sections. **LEAVES:** compound, 4–5 pairs of leaflets, **dark-green**, thick and shiny, **leaflets increase in size** towards the largest central leaflet, to 16 cm, **below midrib continues into an unusual hairy tip**. Leaf and stalk hairy below. **FLOWERS:** inconspicuous in fragrant clusters, cream-green, 5 thick petals and a hairy centre of stamens, July–November. **FRUIT:** round red-brown hairy capsules to 3 cm across, dry and split into 3 or 4 parts. Up to 6 seeds hang out, shiny black, almost covered by a soft orange-red coat, December–March.

Propagation: Seedlings, direct seeding, root suckers.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: 300. Collect seed when capsules start opening, dry in shade. Sow fresh seed for best results.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Seeds lose viability quickly. Sow within 3–4 days.

Management: Coppicing, pollarding.

Remarks: A fairly fast growing tree with excellent shade. Timber is pink-grey-brown, very susceptible to insect attack. Oil from the seed has been used to make soap and can also be used to treat hair and skin disorders. It is very poisonous.

