

Uapaca kirkiana

Euphorbiaceae

Indigenous

English: Wild loquat**Nyanja:** Msuku**Senga:** Musuku**Tumbuka:** Musuku

Ecology: A well-known fruit tree of central and southern Africa north to Tanzania; 800–1,900 m. The tree grows throughout Zambia except in the sandy soils of Kalabo District. In Eastern Province, it is an occasional tree of open woodlands, stony hills and valley soils. Its presence indicates poor and shallow soils.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, **timber** (general purposes), poles, **food** (fruit, drink), medicine (roots, bark, leaves), fodder (leaves, fruit), bee forage, shade.

Description: A small semi-deciduous tree, usually 5–6 m, with a **characteristic dense rounded crown**. **BARK:** rough, grey-black, shallow vertical grooves, scaly. **LEAVES:** grouped at branch tips, **large and leathery, to 17 cm**, shiny dark green above, **orange-yellow woolly hairs below**, especially on the prominent veins; **tips notched**. **FLOWERS:** male and female trees, with flowers produced on the old wood, **male flowers orange-yellow in bunches**, female green-white solitary; January–April and casual flowering September–November. **FRUIT:** abundant, **rounded, yellow-orange to 3 cm; pulpy, sweet flesh** surrounds 3–4 seeds.

Propagation: Seedlings, root suckers, wildings.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: $\pm 2,500$. Germination from fresh seed is good.

treatment: Remove seed coat to enhance germination.

storage: Sow fresh seed as it does not store well.

Management: Coppicing, protect wildings. Symbiosis with mycorrhiza is required for good growth. Collect nursery soil from underneath mature trees.

Remarks: ICRAF researchers are looking into possibilities for domestication of this useful tree. Wine can be made from the fruit. People often leave this species when clearing land for crops as the fruit can be sold in local markets. If the roots are damaged, root suckers readily develop. The flowers are valued as bee forage. The timber has white sapwood and red-brown figured heartwood and is useful for furniture. If large tracts of land are cleared for agriculture, it is important to leave both male and female trees for sustained fruit production. This tree can be distinguished from *U. benguelensis* by the latter's smooth, dark grey bark.

