

## *Ziziphus abyssinica*

## Rhamnaceae

Indigenous

**Nyanja:** Kankande, mlasawantu, mushawankhunzi

**Senga:** Kangolobozi

**Tumbuka:** Kangolobozi

**Ecology:** A common tree of medium to low altitudes, from Senegal to Ethiopia to South Africa, 400–2,200 m. It is found in the drier areas of Zambia in open woodlands; locally frequent in chipya, Kalahari and also in munga scrub.

**Uses:** Firewood, charcoal, timber (tool handles, handicrafts), fence posts, food (fruit), medicine (roots, leaves), fodder (leaves, fruit), **bee forage, live fence.**

**Description:** A spiny tree about 3–6 m, **crown rounded.** BARK: grey, deeply grooved; thorns may be single or paired, one recurved, the other sharp and straight to 2 cm. LEAVES: leathery, broadly oval to 8 cm, **the leaf base unequal, shiny green above, hairy yellow-grey below, veins distinctive,** edge finely toothed, shortly stalked. FLOWERS: green-yellow, in small groups, October–March and casual flowering May–June. FRUIT: **rounded to 3 cm, shiny red-brown,** edible when ripe, 1–2 seeds inside the stone, April–August; remaining a long time on the tree.

**Propagation:** Seedlings, direct seeding, root suckers, cuttings.

**Seed:** Germination rates often low. No. of seeds per kg: 430–2,000.

**treatment:** Soak in hot water and allow to cool for 24–48 hours, or crack hard seed cover.

**storage:** Seed can be stored for up to a year.

**Management:** Lopping, pollarding, pruning, coppicing.

**Remarks:** This is a useful live fence around dimba because of the vicious thorns and farmers should be encouraged to plant it because of the edible fruit and excellent bee forage. Thorny branches are sometimes put over graves in Eastern Province as a protection from animals. The timber is heavy, hard and resistant to termites and borers. Ash from burnt leaves mixed with salt is used to treat tonsillitis.

