

LOCAL NAMES

English (red thorn); Tigrigna (lahai)

BOTANIC DESCRIPTION

Acacia lahai is a flat-topped tree 3-15 m tall with rough brown or grey-brown bark. Young branchlets brown to blackish-purple, pubescent. Stipules spinescent, up to 7 cm long, straight, subulate but not enlarged or fusiform, prickles absent below stipules. Bark gray-brown and fibrous in texture.

Leaves pinnate, pinnae 3-15 pairs, leaflets glabrous 10-28 pairs, 1.5-4.5 mm long 0.3-1.0 mm wide.

Flowers cream or white, sessile, in spikes 2.5-7 cm long on peduncles 0.7-2 cm long, axis with many subsessile or sessile glands. Calyx 0.5-1.25 mm long. Corolla 2-3 mm long, glabrous, 4-5 lobed. Stamen filaments 4.5-5 mm long; anthers 0.1 mm across with a caducous gland.

Fruit a brown, straight or falcate, dehiscent pod, glabrous on stipe, 4-7 cm long x 1.5-3 cm wide.

Seeds obliquely obovate, flattened, 6-7 mm long x 5 mm wide.

The generic name 'acacia' comes from the Greek word 'akis', meaning point or barb.

BIOLOGY

A. lahai is a hermaphroditic species.

ECOLOGY

A. lahai is characteristic of high altitude woodland and wooded savanna. Locally common where upland forest has disappeared it forms dense woodlands invading grasslands.

BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS

Altitude: 1 800-2 400m

DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION

Native: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda

Exotic:



The map above shows countries where the species has been planted. It does neither suggest that the species can be planted in every ecological zone within that country, nor that the species can not be planted in other countries than those depicted. Since some tree species are invasive, you need to follow biosafety procedures that apply to your planting site.

PRODUCTS

Fuel: The tree is a significant source of firewood, and makes excellent charcoal.

Timber: Wood red, hard and durable. Timber is used for construction in Kenya.

Gum or resin: An edible gum is collected from *A. lahai*.

Tannin or dyestuff: Aqueous bark extracts are sprinkled on pottery to impart a reddish finish.

Medicine: Bark used for the treatment of skin eruptions in children, clearing toxicaemia of pregnancy and bowels and also as an astringent.

SERVICES

Erosion control: An important erosion control tree in wooded grasslands and savanna.

Shade or shelter: The tree's broad canopy and heavy foliage make it a good shade tree.

Nitrogen fixing: The tree is nitrogen fixing thus improves soil fertility.

Boundary or barrier or support: Dry timber used as fence posts.

TREE MANAGEMENT

A. lahai is a fast growing tree commonly managed by lopping.

GERMPLASM MANAGEMENT

Seed storage behaviour is orthodox, there are approximately 4 000 seeds/kg. The damaged, lighter seeds can be selectively collected by immersing in water. Pre-sowing treatment not necessary.

PESTS AND DISEASES

Insect pests cause seed damage.

FURTHER READING

Hubbard CE and Milne-Redhead MA. 1959. Flora of Tropical East Africa, Leguminosae subfamily Mimosoideae. Crown Agents, London.

ICRAF. 1992. A selection of useful trees and shrubs for Kenya: Notes on their identification, propagation and management for use by farming and pastoral communities. ICRAF.

Kokwaro JO. 1976. Medicinal plants of East Africa. East African Literature Bureau.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Orwa C, A Mutua, Kindt R, Jamnadass R, S Anthony. 2009 Agroforestry Database: a tree reference and selection guide version 4.0 (<http://www.worldagroforestry.org/sites/treedbs/treedatabases.asp>)