

**LOCAL NAMES**

Afrikaans (boskoorsbessie); English (woodland croton, forest fever berry); Xhosa (umfeze, umagwaqane); Zulu (umzilanyoni, umhloshazane, ugebeleweni, indulambahlozi)

**BOTANIC DESCRIPTION**

*Croton sylvaticus* is a tree growing up to 30 m tall, with a dense spreading crown, bole straight, up to 1 m in diameter. Bark smooth on young branches; stems grey, roughly fissured and strongly aromatic.

Leaves simple, broadly ovate, alternate, smooth and dark green; 3-5 nerved, leaf margin shallowly toothed; leaf tip acuminate, base cuneate, rounded or subcordate, 5-15 cm long and up to 10 cm wide. Leaf stalk 10 cm long with 2 prominent knob-like glands at junction of stalk and leaf blade.

Flowers 3 mm long, cream coloured; placed on long terminal inflorescences up to 20 cm long, male flowers at top and female flowers at lower part of inflorescence. Male flowers are petalled.

Fruit a 3-seeded short stalked capsule; 1 cm long, surface slightly warted and salmon orange.

The scientific names summed up mean the 'woodland croton'.

**BIOLOGY**

Reportedly monoecious, although trees may be predominantly male or female during flowering. Woodland croton flowers from September-January and fruits from December-May. Self fertilization fails either due to protoandry or protogyny.

**ECOLOGY**

*C. sylvaticus* is normally found in coastal forest, evergreen woodland and stream banks.

**BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS**

Altitude: 60-1 800 m

Soil type: Prefers fluvisols.

**DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION**

Native: Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, South Africa, 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**

Fodder: The fruits are very popular with birds and can be promising as poultry feed.

Fuel: The wood is excellent fuel, burning even when green.

Timber: Wood yellowish-white, streaked, soft, light and easily worked.

Poison: The bark is used as fish poison.

Medicine: The root is a remedy for indigestion whereas the bark is used for chest problems and rheumatism. Leaves made into a poultice to treat pleurisy. In Kenya tree parts are used to treat malaria.

**SERVICES**

Shade or shelter: *C. sylvaticus* is an important shade tree, the Venda name "muima-vanda" means 'stand in courtyard', however planting should not be very close to buildings because of its rather weak root system.

Ornamental: *C. sylvaticus* is a beautiful shade tree suitable for avenues, parks and gardens.

Boundary or barrier or support: Poles used in fence construction.

**TREE MANAGEMENT**

The growth rate of the forest fever tree is very fast, about 1.5 m/ year. Prefers deep shade conditions but can even survive full sunlight. The tree is vulnerable to cold wind, if planted in cold areas young plants must be protected against cold winds and frost for the first two seasons. Transplanting should normally be done at the 2-leaf stage.

**GERMPLASM MANAGEMENT**

The seeds take 14-21 days to germinate. Germination is even.

**FURTHER READING**

Palmer E, Pitman N. 1972. Trees of Southern Africa Vol. 2. A.A. Balkema Cape Town.

Venter F, Venter J-A. 1996. Making the most of Indigenous trees. Briza Publications.

**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>)