

Acacia mearnsii (*Racosperma mearnsii*)

South-eastern Australia

COMMON NAMES: **English:** Black wattle; **Kamba:** Munyoonyoo; **Kikuyu:** Muthanduku; **Kisii:** Omotandege.

DESCRIPTION: A round or shapeless tree, 2–15 m, trunk often bent when trees are grown outside plantations. **BARK:** Smooth green, later black, grooved, splitting to give resinous gum. **LEAVES:** Twice-divided, dull green, leaflets extremely small, upper surface of leaf stalk scattered with glands. **FLOWERS:** Many, pale yellow, fragrant, in small round heads. **FRUIT:** Numerous pods, with 3–12 joints, drying dull brown, straight or bent. Seeds small and black.

ECOLOGY: A small tree native to Australia, where it grows from southern New South Wales to Tasmania. Introduced worldwide and now found both in temperate regions and in cool tropical highlands. Grown in plantations and also naturalized in highland parts of Kenya such as Trans Nzoia, Kisii, Limuru, Muguga and around Eldoret and Nairobi. A plant of cool, moist areas at mid-altitudes, mainly 1,500–2,500 m. Common in most soil types. Agroclimatic Zones I–III.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, poles, posts, tool handles, medicine, bee forage, ornamental, windbreak, fibre (bark), gum, tannin.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, direct sowing at site.

SEED: Germination rate 50–80% in 7–15 days; 50,000–85,000 per kg.

treatment: Immerse seed in hot water, allow to cool and soak for 12 hours before sowing to break dormancy. Burning dry twigs with mature pods spread on an area will usually result in profuse natural regeneration.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods.

MANAGEMENT: Fast growing but short lived. Thin if established by direct sowing at site. It coppices poorly.

REMARKS: A tree for woodlots. Potentially a weed on farmland. Can be difficult to eradicate. It should not be intercropped as it competes for nutrients and light.



Fabaceae (Mimosaceae)

Introduced to Kenya for its tannin-rich bark used as a source of tannin for tanning leather. Also appreciated as a quick-growing tree for firewood. Suppresses undergrowth and thus not suited for erosion-prone areas.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Albrecht, 1993; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Dharani, 2002; Mbuya et al., 1994; National Academy of Sciences, 1980; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Turnbull, 1986.



Flower heads

