

Albizia amara**Mimosaceae (Fabaceae)****Indigenous**

COMMON NAMES: **Boran:** Boria; **English:** Bitter albizia; **Kamba:** Kiundua, Kiundwa, Kyundua; **Luo:** Ruga; **Maasai:** Orperelon'go; **Pokot:** Panan; **Somali:** Gessreb; **Tharaka:** Mutinda; **Tugen:** Gotutwet, Kotutwo, Kukutwo.

DESCRIPTION: A deciduous tree to 15 m, often smaller, with spreading crown, fairly dense canopy, trunk often crooked, usually single-stemmed. **BARK:** Dark brown, cracked. **LEAVES:** Have a feathery appearance with numerous small leaflets. **FLOWERS:** Numerous, small cream-pink heads, half-spherical about 2.5 cm across. **FRUIT:** Large pods, to 20 cm or more long, 3 cm wide, thin, bulging over few seeds, purple when young, later brown and papery.

ECOLOGY: An attractive deciduous tree found in India and Sri Lanka and in East Africa south to north-eastern South Africa. Widespread in Kenya in bushland, in wooded grassland, bushed grassland, often with *Combretum*, *Terminalia* and *Tarchonanthus*, especially in red and sandy soils, 500–2,000 m. Rainfall: 400–1,000 mm. Agroclimatic Zones IV–V.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber (construction), farm implements, furniture, poles, soup additive (wood extract), edible gum, medicine, fodder (leaves), bee forage, ornamental, green manure, nitrogen-fixing, soil conservation, tannin, resin, detergent (roots and leaves), live fence.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, direct sowing at site.

SEED: 10,000–13,000 seeds per kg. Germination of treated seed is good, up to 80% in 7–10 days.

treatment: Immerse in hot water, allow to cool and soak for 12 hours, or nick the seed.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods but are susceptible to insect damage. Add ash.

MANAGEMENT: Coppicing, lopping, pollarding.

REMARKS: The wood is hard and good for charcoal and firewood and it is an excellent shade tree. Pieces of stem wood are used in the preparation of soup (Maasai). There are 2 subspecies in Kenya: subsp. *amara*, with fewer pinnae (to 12 pairs) and leaflets, is only found in the central and northern parts of Kenya, while subsp. *sericocephala* (numerous pinnae, to 46 pairs) and leaflets (48 pairs) is more widespread in the country.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Dharani, 2002; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Storrs, 1979.

