

Albizia glaberrima

Fabaceae (Mimosaceae)

Indigenous

STANDARD/TRADE NAME: White nongo, Mchani mbao.

COMMON NAMES: **Kamba:** Isavi; **Pokomo:** Mchachampili; **Swahili:** Mchani, Mkumba mbega; **Taveta:** Mfurugaji.

DESCRIPTION: An evergreen forest tree, 15–30 m, the cylindrical bole spreading to a somewhat flattened crown. **BARK:** Finely fissured, grey. **LEAVES:** Twice-divided with only 1–4 pairs pinnae, having 3–6 pairs of medium-sized leaflets. **Leaflets widest towards the tip, very one-sided, curved, usually 2.5–5 cm long and 1.5–3.5 cm across** (even bigger in young plants—up to 10 cm long), the midrib nearly diagonal and continued into the leaf tip, which is blunt. **FLOWERS:** In half-spherical heads, small and white. **FRUIT:** **Red-brown flat pods, 12–26 cm long and 3–4 cm wide, tip rounded, dull and well veined, 6–12 flat oval seeds within.**

ECOLOGY: A tree found at low altitudes from Senegal to Sudan and south to Angola, mainly in coastal or riverine forests. In Kenya, found in coastal and adjoining inland areas, 0–900 m. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber, fodder (leaves), shade, nitrogen-fixing.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, wildings.

SEED: When the pod splits open the seeds remain on one side of the pod and are blown long distances by the wind. Difficult to collect.

treatment: Immerse in boiling water, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours.

storage: Seed can be stored for a few months, but are very susceptible to insect attack. Add ash to reduce insect damage.

MANAGEMENT: Slow growing; coppicing, pollarding.

REMARKS: Produces good durable timber. *A. versicolor* (Swahili and Digo: Mtsani ndovu, Mchani ndovu) is another useful species found only at the southern part of the Kenyan coast in wooded grassland.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Katende et al., 1995; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002.

