

***Albizia lebeck*****Fabaceae (Mimosaceae)****Tropical Asia**

**COMMON NAMES:** Digo: Mchani; **English:** Woman's-tongue tree, Siris, East Indian walnut; **Luo:** Oturbam; **Maasai:** Ortuba; **Swahili:** Mkungu.

**DESCRIPTION:** An attractive deciduous tree that may reach 20 m, usually 8–14 m; the trunk often short. **BARK:** Grey-violet with rusty-brown breathing pores. **LEAVES:** 3–11 pairs of leaflets, each oblong, tip rounded, usually 2–3 cm. **FLOWERS:** Green-yellow, fragrant brush heads on a stalk; short lived. **FRUIT:** Shiny yellow-brown pods in clusters decorate the tree for a long time; each pod up to 30 cm long, bulging over seeds, the seeds and pods 'chatter' in the wind.

**ECOLOGY:** Naturalized in parts of Africa and the Caribbean. Commonly planted in the tropics as a shade tree. Found in the Lake Victoria basin and at the coast, 0–1,800 m, in some places naturalized. Extensive roots near the surface. Prefers black-cotton soil but will grow in a wide range of soils, acid, alkaline and saline. Agroclimatic Zones II–III.

**USES:** Firewood, charcoal, timber, furniture, poles, posts, flooring, fodder, bee forage, shade, ornamental, mulch, green manure, soil conservation, nitrogen-fixing, gum, tannin, detergent (dried and pounded bark).

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings, direct sowing at site, produces root suckers.

**SEED:** A prolific seed producer; 7,000–12,000 seeds per kg. Seed germination is good. Seed collection is done at the coast from February to March.

**treatment:** Not necessary, but soaking in cold water for 24–48 hours or immersing and soaking in boiling water for a few seconds may hasten germination.

**storage:** Seed can be stored for long periods if kept free from insects.

**MANAGEMENT:** Fast growing on good sites; lopping, pollarding, coppicing, pruning.

**REMARKS:** Hard and heavy wood. Introduced and became an invasive species in Venezuela and the Caribbean.

**FURTHER READING:** <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Jensen, 1999; Katende et al.,

1995; Mbuya et al., 1994; National Academy of Sciences, 1979, 1980; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; von Maydell, 1990.

