

Arundinaria alpina

Gramine

Indigenous

Common names: Arusha: ol moloi; Chag: kiwale, marere; Eng: mountain bamboo; Goro: dai; Hehe: mulansi; Iraqw: Dar; Kinga lilanzi; Lugu: mtoronge; Maasai: ol dean, ol marere; Meru: ireko; Nguu: lasi; Nyak: umulasi; Nyam: mlanzi, mwanzi; Swah: mianzi.

Ecology: The bamboos are, mostly tall, tree-like grasses. They are mainly plants of moist tropical forests but reach into warm temperate zones. Many flower after long periods. The indigenous bamboo, *Arundinaria alpina*, is still found at high elevations on Mts. Meru and Kilimanjaro (2,700-3,000 m). It is also found in Iringa highlands in dense thickets. Although it originates at high altitudes it will grow quite well at much lower altitudes if well watered.

Uses: Poles, utensils, tool handles, food (shoots), soil conservation, ornamental, fencing, basketry.

Description: A very large hollow-stemmed grass, usually 6-8 m but can reach 12-25 m. **STEMS:** Smooth, woody, hollow, yellow-brown, growing from swollen underground stems (rhizomes). Whorls of thin branches grow at the upper nodes between stem sections. Stems can reach 7-10 cm in diameter. **LEAVES:** grow from branchlet nodes, pale green up to 20 cm long and 1 cm wide, the tip long and thin rough to the touch because of short hairs. Leaves appear from a large yellow leaf sheath to 50 cm long, with purple hairs. **FLOWERS:** rarely seen, in heads 10-20 cm long. After flowering the plant dies down.

Propagation: Rhizomes, seedlings (possible but rare).

Seed info.:

treatment:

storage:

Management:

Very fast growing in optimal conditions; needs to be controlled. Seed watered daily will germinate readily; Transfer to seed boxes when 2.5 cm high. Plant out after 8-12 months. Offsets from one-year-old culms can be planted out and will develop quicker than seedlings.

Remarks: Susceptible to termites and borers. In Tanzania, especially in Iringa, the bamboo has been tested for use as water pipes (replacing the steel or plastic pipes).

