

Bauhinia variegata

Caesalpinioideae

India, Tropical Asia, China

- Common names:** Eng: bauhinia, camel's foot, orchid tree.
- Ecology:** A tree grown throughout the tropics, and in Tanzania grown up to 1,500 m. Commonly planted in gardens and avenues in most towns throughout the country.
- Uses:** Firewood, tools, food (shoots as vegetables), fodder, shade, ornamental, soil conservation, soil improvement, tannin.
- Description:** An attractive small semi-deciduous tree, usually to 6 m but sometimes much taller. **BARK:** grey and smooth, furrowed and flaking with age. **LEAVES:** alternate, **dull blue-green, the two lobes 10-15 cm across** (camel-foot shaped), veins radiating from the leaf base. **FLOWERS:** pink-white in short sprays, each flower with **five petals marked with rose or yellow-green, one petal different in shape and colour** (orchid like), five arched stamens. **FRUIT:** flat brown pods **to 20 cm long, twist open** to release round flat seeds 1 cm across.
- Propagation:** Seedlings, direct sowing.
- Seed info.:** No. of seeds per kg: 4,200-5,700. Germination rate is about 70%, completed after three weeks.
- treatment:** not necessary for fresh seeds. Soak stored seeds in cold water for 24 hours.
- storage:** If sun dried and stored at room temperature seed can retain viability for some months. Best germination from fresh seeds.
- Management:** Coppicing, lopping, pollarding.
- Remarks:** In India and Nepal flowers are used for vegetables and pickles. The heavy, hard wood makes good tools. *B. galpinii* (*B. punctata*), the red bauhinia, from South Africa, is a vigorous shrub or climber with flame-coloured flowers and is grown in lowland Tanzania. *Bauhinia acuminata*, with white flowers, is from tropical Asia and is commonly grown.

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