

Cupressus lusitanica

Cupressaceae

Mexico, Guatamala

- Common names: Chag: mtarakwa; Eng: cypress, Mexican cypress.
- Ecology: A fast-growing cypress representing over 40% of the plantation trees in Tanzania. Grows best above 1,500 m with good soil and fair rainfall. It has been widely planted throughout Tanzania (Meru, Shume, West and Norm Kilimanjaro, Kawetire plantations).
- Uses: Firewood, poles, posts, timber (furniture, construction), ornamental, shade, windbreak, live fence.
- Description: An evergreen tree to 35 m with straight trunk, generally conical but irregular in shape, the branches hang down with branchlets in all directions. BARK: red-brown with vertical grooves/grey with age. LEAVES: dull blue-green, the tiny leaves in 4 ranks, with spreading pointed tips. FRUIT: male cones like fat tips to branchlets, producing clouds of yellow pollen dust; female cones ripen in two years, rounded, 1.5 cm across, brown, the cone scales with central, pointed projections. About 75 winged seeds are released from beneath the cone scales.
- Propagation: Seedlings, wildings.
- Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: 160,000-290,000. Germination of good seed 30-40% in 10-20 days,
- treatment: not necessary.
- storage: seed can be stored for up to six months.
- Management: Fast growing on good sites, moderate on poorer sites- Weeding during early establishment; trimming as a hedge, pruning and thinning of trees in woodlots used for timber.
- Remarks: Can produce poles after 10 years, general-purpose timber after 20 years. Not good for intercropping. From 1990 severely attacked by the cypress aphid: branches turn yellow, later dry out. The aphid is difficult to control and thus planting cannot be recommended until a solution (biological control) is found. Young trees grown in the Uluguru Mountains are sold profitably in Dar es Salaam as Christmas trees.

