

Hyphaene petersiana (*H. benguellensis* var. *ventricosa*)

Palmae

Indigenous

English: fan palm, Doum palm, vegetable ivory**Kunda:** Nyamavumo**Nyanja:** Mlaza**Senga:** Kakoma**Tumbuka:** Kakoma**Ecology:** A fan palm which is usually solitary. Found throughout the Zambezi region through the Congo to Angola to West Africa, south to Mozambique and north to Tanzania. It is common on the alluvial flats of hot dry valleys, on termite mounds near dambo and plain margins. In Eastern Province, it is a common tree in Luangwa Valley.**Uses:** **Rafters, poles, fruit, mats** (leaves), **baskets** (leaves), strings (fibres).**Description:** A fan palm with an **unbranched trunk** to 20 m high, 25 cm diameter at breast height, sometimes with a swelling 1–2 m below the crown (like *Borassus*). The **trunk may be leaning or curved** and the **stem base is raised 15–30 cm on a mass of fibrous roots** (unlike *Borassus*). **BARK:** a thin grey-black bole, vertically cracked, clearly marked with **concentric rings of leaf scars**. **LEAVES:** a crown of **20–25 fan-shaped waxy grey-green leaves** on young trees; leaves persist a long time below the crown until they rot and fall. Leaf stalk 1–2 m, the base edged with black hooked spines. The fan has **20–50 folded segments** joined for only half their length. **FLOWERS:** yellowish green, borne on separate male and female trees, hang on hairy brown flower heads, mid-September to mid-November. **FRUIT:** ripe fruit variable but always **small**, 5–8 cm, **rounded or ovoid**, shiny and a rich red-brown colour, central stone 3.5 cm across. The white onion-shaped seed contains a little milk and an edible brown spongy layer surrounds it. Ripe fruit can remain on the tree for 2 years.**Propagation:** Seed, wildings.**Seed:** Stores for a very short time once extracted from the fruit.**treatment:** –**storage:** –**Management:** Slow growing. Protection from fires.**Remarks:** The wood is handsome and takes a beautiful polish; borer-proof. Seed germinates naturally when it passes through the intestines of elephants. Difficult to raise in nurseries. In Luangwa Valley used for making mats, and the trunks for rafters.