

Leucaena leucocephala (L. glauca)

Mimosoideae

Central America

Nyanja: Lusina, lukina**Senga:** Lukina**Tumbuka:** Lukina

Ecology: Widely introduced throughout the tropics, including Africa, over the last 100 years. Today there are a great variety of *Leucaena* suitable for different habitats, 0–1,800 m. This species grows everywhere in Zambia in well-drained neutral soils with adequate rainfall. It does not tolerate highly acidic soil or dry sites.

Uses: Firewood, **fodder** (leaves, shoots), bee forage, ornamental, **soil improvement, nitrogen fixation**.

Description: An evergreen shrub or tree usually 3–5 m tall with a leafy canopy. **BARK:** grey-brown, smooth. **LEAVES:** compound, with many leaflets, on a stalk to 20 cm, **each leaflet thin and pointed, about 1 cm. Leaves and leaflets fold up** with heat, cold or lack of water. **FLOWERS:** round, white “balls”, to 2 cm, on a long stalk. **FRUIT:** bunches of thin, **brown pods, to 15 cm long**, persist on the tree; split to set free up to 25 hard shiny brown seeds.

Propagation: Seedlings, direct seeding.

Seed: The species is a prolific seeder. Germination rate 85–100%. No. of seeds per kg: 13,000–34,000.

treatment: Soak in hot water and allow to cool for 24–48 hours.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods.

Management: Pollarding, lopping, coppicing.

Remarks: When used as fodder, *Leucaena* leaves should not exceed 20% of the feed intake because they contain mimosine. It may cause hair loss and stomach problems if fed in excess. Its deep roots bring up nutrients and root nodules are very active. It is fast growing. The *Leucaena* psyllid, *Heteropsylla cubana*, has recently appeared as a serious pest of *Leucaena leucocephala* and other leucaenas. After attack by the psyllid growth of the tree is retarded. Researchers are testing more psyllid-resistant varieties of *Leucaena*.

