

Cynometra alexandri *Caesalpiaceae*

Indigenous

Trade names: Uganda iron wood, muhimbi. **Kwamba:** Kahimbi **Runyankore:** Muhindi
Common names: **Runyoro:** Muhimbi.

Ecology:

There are 50-60 pantropical rain-forest *Cynometra* species, including several in East Africa. Forests of Uganda ironwood are confined to the Western Rift Valley in Uganda. It is the dominant tree in the mature (climax) Budongo Forest, found generally **at** lower altitudes, 1,000-1,200 m, e.g. in Budongo, Kibale, Maramagambo and Kasyoha-Kitome as well as Mangiro Forests. Perhaps there is a larger standing volume of this species than of any other timber tree in Uganda.

Uses:

Firewood, charcoal, timber (flooring, bridges, railway sleepers, props in mines), poles, tools, bee forage, soil conservation, ornamental.

Description:

An unmistakable evergreen tree, 10-50 m, to a spreading rather flat-topped crown. Many **large buttresses, thin and plank-like**, almost triangular, often extending along the ground around the tree like ribbons. The **bole is short, rough or twisted, the branches arising low down.** BARK: quite thin, smooth, grey-brown, **flaking** characteristically into **irregular sheets** (large or small. Branchlets roughly hairy. LEAVES: pinnate, usually only **2 pairs of dark green, smooth leaflets** (or 3), on a stalk about 3 cm, grooved almost winged, leaflets long oval about 6 cm (1-10 cm), narrowed to a pointed tip, the **upper pair much larger than the lower pair.** FLOWERS: white (pink), very fragrant, densely crowded in heads 2-6 cm on jointed stalks. FRUIT: **smooth flat pods, 5-10 cm**, each round or pointed, 3-4 flat circular seeds.

Propagation:

Seedlings (sow seed in pots), wildings, direct sowing on site.

Seed:

Large bean-like seeds. No. of seeds per kg: about 290. The pods open naturally and the seed can easily be collected from the ground during the season,

treatment:

not necessary.

storage:

seeds of this species are easily attacked by insects. Storing is difficult without use of insecticides. Add ash to reduce insect damage.

Management:

The tree is a slow grower and requires shade until established. Coppicing, pollarding.

Remarks:

The species grows as a shrub in gullies holding soils against erosion and landslides. It has an enormous number of lateral roots and thus should not be intercropped. When suitably pruned, **it** can be grown as an ornamental shrub. The timber is strong, durable and termite resistant, thus suitable for heavy construction, but it is difficult to saw or plane.

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flower



flowering branchlet



open pod

