

Trichilia emetica (T. roka)

Meliaceae

Indigenous

Common names: **Chag:** mchengo, mechengo, mkongoni, mututu, mwavai; **Eng:** Cape mahogany; **Gogo:** nyembe mwitu; **Ha:** mtandaruka; **Lugu:** mtengotengo; **Nguu:** mgolimazi; **Nyak:** msanguti; **Samb:** mgolimazi; **Suku:** sungute; **Swah:** mkungwina, mtimaji, mtimai; **Zigua:** mgolimazi.

Ecology: A widespread and important tree of high forest, often by rivers in Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, south to Mozambique, 0-1,800 m. Prefers well-drained, rich soil and high ground water. There is a smaller savannah form with corky grey bark.

Uses: Firewood, timber (furniture, boats), poles, tool handles, medicine (leaves, bark, roots, oil), fodder, bee forage, shade, ornamental, soil conservation, oil, soap (seed).

Description: An evergreen tree, 15-30 m, with **dark hanging foliage**, crown oval to rounded and dense when mature, rather smooth. **BARK:** red-brown, scaling to show green underbark. **LEAVES:** compound 4-5 pairs leaflets, thick and glossy, **leaflets increase in size from the base upwards to largest terminal leaflet**, maximum 16 cm, underside with soft hairs and midrib continues as a hairy tip; leaf stalks and shoots softly hairy. **FLOWERS:** creamy white, fragrant in inconspicuous clusters in heads to 10 cm, 5 thick petals about 2 cm around hairy centre of stamens. **FRUIT:** rounded, furry, brown capsules to 3 cm across, split into 3 or 4 parts to reveal **3-5 shiny black seeds each with a fleshy orange aril** almost covering the seed.

Propagation: Seedlings, direct sowing.

Seed info.: No. of seed per kg: 300. Sow fresh seeds for best results; seeds do not store. Collect when capsules start opening, dry in the shade, shake out seed and sow immediately,

treatment: collect when capsules start opening, dry in the shade then shake out seed; remove aril by maceration in water, then sow immediately,

storage: seed loses viability quickly.

Management: Fairly fast growing.

Remarks: The aril is removed from the seed and crushed with water to form a suspension used in cooking. Seeds are extremely poisonous. Leaves have some soapy properties and have been exploited during bad economic periods in Tanzania (e.g. 1979-1982). The pink-grey-brown timber is very susceptible to insect attack.

