

Leaflet No. 55

Tree Seed Information Leaflet



Trichilia emetica

For more information contact:

The Director
Kenya Forestry Research Institute
P.O. Box 20412-00200
Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: +254-724259781/2
+254-722-157414
+254-20-2010651/2

E-mail: director@kefri.org
Website: www.kefri.org



Kenya Forestry Research Institute

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Species: *Trichilia emetica* Vahl.

Family: Meliaceae

English name: Cape mahogany

Local names: Mururi (Kikuyu)
Mutuati (Meru)
Ilberi (Samburu)
Munyama (Luyah)
Ochond athuth (Luo)
Kurteswa (Marakwet)

Description

Trichilia emetica is an indigenous, evergreen dioecious tree that can grow to a height of up to 30 m. The tree has a dark grey, smooth bark and spreading crown. Leaves are compound with 9-11 dark green leaflets. Flowers are inconspicuous, fragrant, clustered, cream-green and have 5 thick petals around a hairy centre of stamens. Fruits are round, red-brown hairy capsules, splitting into 3 - 4 sections with brownish seeds with reddish fleshy outgrowth.

Distribution

Trichilia emitica prefers well drained, rich soil and high ground water. The species grows well at 0 - 1,450 m above sea level. In dry areas it is usually found in riparian areas while in higher altitude it is a constituent of high forest.

Flowering and fruiting

Flowering occurs between September and October. Pollination is done by insects and fruit maturity takes 4 - 6 months. Seeds can be collected from February to March.

Seed collection method

Seeds can be collected from the crown by hand picking or by cutting down the branchlets containing ripe fruits. Seed collection is done when fruits or capsules change colour to reddish-brown and starts splitting and dispersing the dark brown seeds covered with reddish outgrowth.

Seed extraction, drying and cleaning

Seed extraction is done by drying the capsules until they split open and shaking out the seed from the split capsules.

Seed storage

Trichilia emitica seed should be sown immediately after extraction as it loses viability very fast. The seed of this species is perishable (recalcitrant) and should therefore not be dried or stored.

Number of seeds per kilogram

There are about 700 - 900 seeds per kilogram of clean seed.

Seed sowing and germination

Pre-sowing treatment is not necessary. Under ideal conditions *Trichilia emitica* seed germinate within 10 - 20 days after sowing. The average germination rate of a mature and healthy seed lot is 70 - 90%. The expected number of seedlings per kilogram of seed is 600.

Uses

Trichilia emitica is used for timber, firewood, charcoal production, poles, tool handles, carvings, oil (from seeds), medicine (roots and leaves), bee forage, shade and ornamental purposes.

Compiled by: Angaine P. M.