

**Acacia gerrardii**

Fabaceae (Mimosaceae)

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Kamba:** Muthi; **Kikuyu:** Muthi; **Kipsigis:** Chepitet; **Kisii:** Omokonge; **Luo:** Akurukuru, Sale; **Maasai:** Oling'ongwenyi; **Pokot:** Chesams; **Samburu:** Oling'ongwenyi; **Taita:** Mtugo; **Taveta:** Mtugo; **Tugen:** Sebeldit.

**DESCRIPTION:** A tree to 15 m with somewhat flattened or irregular crown. Branchlets thick and leafy. **BARK:** Dark grey, rough and grooved on the trunk, brown to grey and smooth on branches. **THORNS:** In pairs, very short and hooked, to 1 cm, but occasionally up to 6 cm long and straight. Long thorns are often quite conspicuous in young plants but feature less in mature trees. **LEAVES:** Twice-divided into tiny leaflets. Leaves usually arising from nodes and several together. **FLOWERS:** Round, cream heads, stalks hairy. **FRUIT:** Reddish brown to grey pods, slightly curved, up to 20 cm long and about 2 cm wide, hang in clusters, veins clear. Splitting on drying.

**ECOLOGY:** Widely distributed from Nigeria to Sudan through East Africa south to KwaZulu Natal in South Africa. In Kenya it is quite common in Rift Valley, Nyanza and Eastern Provinces in wooded grassland; 1,300–2,200 m. Usually riverine in arid and semi-arid areas. Common around Muhoroni, Gilgil, Kajiado and Nairobi. Agroclimatic Zones III–V. Flowers in February in Machakos.

**USES:** Firewood, charcoal, timber, poles, posts, carvings, edible gum, medicine (bark), fodder, bee forage, shade, nitrogen-fixing.

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings, direct sowing at site, wildings.

**SEED:** Flat, about 1 cm long and 0.5 cm wide; 10,000–13,000 per kg.

**treatment:** Immerse seed in hot water, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours before sowing to break seed dormancy.

**storage:** Seed can be stored for long periods.

**MANAGEMENT:** Fast growing where groundwater is within reach. Coppices well and can be pruned or pollarded. Left scattered within pasture.

**REMARKS:** A good shade tree. Produces copious amounts of gum that is edible but rather bitter.

**FURTHER READING:** Beentje, 1994; Dharani, 2002; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; National Academy of Sciences, 1979; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Storrs, 1979.

