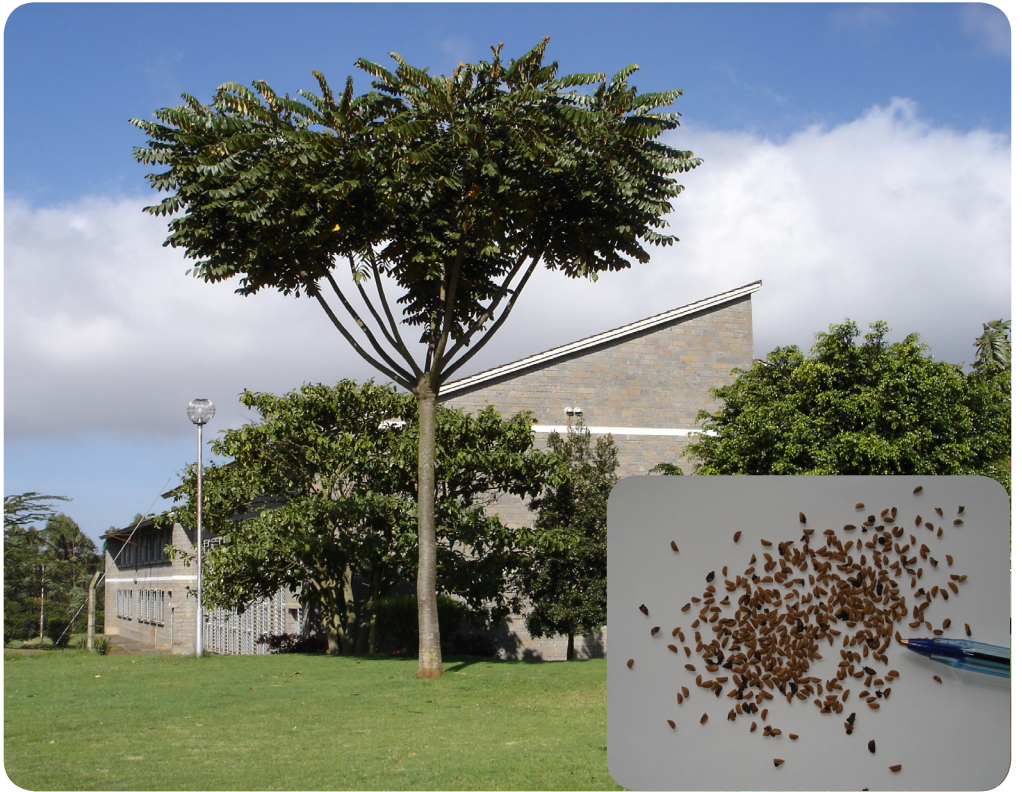


## Tree Seed Information Leaflet



*Polyscias kikuyuensis*

**Species:** *Polyscias kikuyuensis* Summerh.

**Family:** Araliaceae

**Common name:** Parasol Tree, Mutati

**Local name:** Mutati (Kikuyu)

Mukurukuru (Meru)

Mkanya (Taita)

Olyalilingi (Maasai)

Sojyet (Nandi)

Aonet (Kipsigis)

Ewondet (Sebei)

**Description:** *Polyscias kikuyuensis* is a deciduous tree up to 25m high with a straight clear bole to 15m, dividing into a few main branches which themselves each divide in a similar manner. Bark is grey, smooth with prominent leaf scars. Leaves are compound, very large with 8-14 pairs of leaflets plus a terminal one; leaflets are dark green above and yellowish brown below. Flowers are cream, small and arranged along the secondary inflorescence branches. (cf. *P. fulva*). Mature fruits are black, small, oval, compressed and ribbed, about 6mm long.

**Note:** *Polyscias kikuyuensis* and *P. fulva* look very similar in their growth habits and general appearance. They are distinguished by their flower (fruit) arrangement. In *P. fulva*, flowers are in racemes along the secondary inflorescence branches while in *P. kikuyuensis*, flowers are in umbels on top of the secondary inflorescence branches.

**Distribution:** The species occur in moist upland forests, often riverine, especially in central highlands, between 1750-2750m in agro climatic Zone I-II. It occurs naturally in southwestern Mt. Kenya, also in drier forests of the upper highlands of the leeward side of Mt. Kenya, in Nyambene, Aberdares, Eastern Mau, Tinderet, Bahati and Eburru forests.

**Flowering and fruiting:** Flowering occurs between May and June. Pollination is by insect. Mature fruits can be collected in August-September and December-January.

**Seed collection method:** The mature purple-black fruits can be collected from the ground or by climbing the tree and collecting from the crown by cutting the fruit stalks using looping shears.

**Seed extraction and drying and cleaning:** Fruits are soaked in water for few hours then rubbing in hands to separate the seeds from the pulp. Seeds are then cleaned by hand sorting by floatation

method. They are then sun dried to the required moisture content (< 10%).

**Seed weight:** There are 300,000–500,000 seeds per kilogram.

**Seed storage:** Seeds can be stored in airtight containers in a cool dry place for up to 2 years with no significant loss of viability.

**Seed sowing and germination:** The seeds germinate within 35–45 days. The expected germination rate of mature and healthy seed lots is 75% on average. Pretreatment is not necessary.

Seeds are sown by broadcasting them thinly and evenly on a well-prepared seedbed (containing sand or a mixture of sand and soil). They are then covered with a thin layer of soil. The seedbed is then covered with a light mulch (dry grass) to keep it moist. Watering is done regularly (morning and evening) checking daily for any emergent seedling. Mulch is removed immediately germination starts. The young seedlings are transplanted when they are large enough to handle (4–5 leaves). Seedlings can be transplanted to pots or polythene tubes containing soil mixed with NPK fertilizer at the rate of 30–40grams per 20liters of soil. Seedlings are planted out when they are 30cm tall (4–6months).

**End Uses:** The species is used for timber (for production of food containers and tea chests) veneers, plywood and beehives. Other uses include medicine (leaves), mulch and green manure.

For more information contact

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