

Tree Seed Information Leaflet



Cupressus lusitanica

Species: *Cupressus lusitanica* Mill.

Family: Cupressaceae

Common name: Mexican cypress.

Local name: Mutarakwa, muthithinda (Kikuyu)

Obudo (Luo)

Omobakora (Kisii)

Mudarakwa (Luhya)

Description: *Cupressus lusitanica* is a tree to 35m high with branches that hang downwards. Bark is red-brown with vertical grooves, turning greyish with age. Leaves are bluish green with pointed tips. Mature female cones are brown and round up to 1.5cm across, covered with scales, each cone with about 75 brownish seeds with a narrow wing.

Distribution: The species is native to Mexico and Guatemala. It grows best in areas above 1,500m with good fertile soils and a mean annual rainfall of over 1000mm. It is widely planted in plantations in all high potential areas especially Western, Rift valley and central highlands.

Flowering and fruiting: Flowers are either male or female (monosexual) and flowering takes place between June and October. Pollination is by wind and cones takes about 6 months to mature. Seed collection takes place between November and May.

Seed collection method: The mature cones are collected from the crowns of standing trees using experienced climbers or from crowns of felled trees when seed collection is synchronized with timber harvesting. Ripe cones or branchlets with ripe cones are handpicked or cut using looping shears, hand secateurs or hooks.

Seed extraction and drying: Cones are sun-dried by spreading on canvas sheet and turning regularly until they open to release the seeds. Seeds are extracted by shaking them out of the opened cones in a cone tumbler. Seeds are cleaned by sieving and hand sorting to remove leaves, small twigs and other impurities. Seeds can be sun-dried to the required moisture content of less than 10% before storage or distribution.

Seed weight: There are 160,000 and 290,000 seeds per kilogram depending on the provenance and the weather conditions during the seeding season.

Seed storage: Seeds can be stored in airtight containers in cool dry place for 1-2 years with no

significant loss in viability.

Seed Sowing and Germination: Seeds germinate within 10-60 days. Pre-sowing treatment is not necessary.

To sow, seeds are broadcasted thinly and evenly on a well-prepared seedbed (containing sand or a mixture of sand and soil) and covered with a thin layer of sand/soil. Light mulch (dry grass) is spread over the seedbed 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 to 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 wood of *Cupressus lusitanica* is used for timber (construction and furniture), poles, posts, plyboard and fuel wood. Other uses include live fence (most popular use of the species by farmers), shade and ornamental

For more information contact

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