

Tree Seed Information Leaflet



Dovyalis caffra

Species: *Dovyalis caffra* (Hook.f. & Harvey) Warb.

Family: Flacourtiaceae

Common name: Kei Apple

Local names: Kaiyaba (Kikuyu)

Kaiyava (Kamba)

Description: *Dovyalis caffra* is a shrub up to 5m high with strong sharp spines. Bark is grey and smooth but later flaking. Leaves are shiny dark green with rounded or notched tip. Flowers are yellowish green with many stamens, in dense clusters. Mature fruits are yellow orange, round and soft to 4 cm across and containing about 10 seeds.

Distribution: The species is native to South Africa and is widely planted between 1,300–2,000 m above sea level. It prefers deep, well drained soils with rainfall of 600–1000 mm. It is very common around Nairobi and central parts of Kenya.

Flowering and fruit development: Flowering occurs at the beginning of long rains March/April. The creamy green small flowers are inconspicuous, in dense clusters, seen more as masses of stamens. After pollination an almost spherical, fleshy fruit is developed within 4 months. Mature fruits can be collected between July and September.

Method of collection: The mature yellow orange fruits are collected from the crown or ground by hand picking or shaking the branches to release the fruits.

Seed extraction, cleaning and drying: Seed extraction involves squeezing the ripe fruits by hands or rubbing gently on fine wire mesh/screen and then washing in running water to remove the pulp. Seeds are dried under shade and then cleaned by hand sorting. The clean seeds are then dried under shade to the required moisture content (less than 10%).

Seed weight: There are 30,000–40,000 seeds per kilogram.

Seed storage: Seeds can be stored in airtight containers in cool dry place for a period of up to 2 years without significant loss of viability.

Seed Sowing and Germination: Seeds germinate within 7–20 days. The expected germination rate is between 80–90%. Pretreatment is not necessary.

Seeds are sown by broadcast 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 sand/soil and light mulch spread over the seedbed to keep it moist. Watering is done regularly (morning and evening) until they germinate. Mulch is removed immediately germination starts. The young seedlings are transplanted when they are large enough to handle (3-4 leaves). The young seedlings are transplanted in pots 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 has several uses that include live fence (most popular use) food (fruit and jam making), bee forage and ornamental.

For more information contact

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