

Leaflet No. 56

Tree Seed Information Leaflet



Sclerocarya birrea



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Kenya Forestry Research Institute

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Species: *Sclerocarya birrea* (A.Rich.) Hochst.

Family: Anacardiaceae

English name: Cider tree, Marula

Local names: Mufula (Giriama)

Mura (Meru)

Muuwa (Kamba)

Oroluwo (Pokot)

Kotelalam (Saboat)

Tololokwo (Tugen)

Ilmanguai (Maasai)

Ekajiket (Turkana)

Arol (Marakwet)

Description

Sclerocarya birrea is an indigenous deciduous shrub or medium sized tree that can grow to a height of up to 15 m. The bark is grey and later changes to black, with irregular cracks. The inner bark is pink-red in colour. Leaves are compound and crowded at the tips of branches that end abruptly with 3 - 18 pairs of leaflets. Flowers can be dioecious or monoecious. Male and female flowers can be borne on the same or different trees. Male flowers are pale green, in hanging spikes while female flowers are purple to reddish, on much shorter spikes. Mature fruits are yellow, oval, about 4 cm long and each fruit contains 2 - 3 seeds.

Distribution

Sclerocarya birrea is widespread in wooded grassland, riverine woodland, bushland and on rocky hills from 800 - 1800 m above sea level. The species is found in Lambwe Valley, Moyale, West Pokot, Kerio Valley, Baringo and also in parts of Coastal and Eastern regions.

Flowering and fruiting

Flowering occur in September to December and fruiting from February to March.

Seed collection method

The mature green-yellow fruits are collected from the crown by climbing the tree and handpicking or shaking branches bearing ripe fruits to release them and then collect from the ground.

Seed extraction, drying and cleaning

Seeds are extracted by rubbing the fruits gently on a wire mesh and washing in running water to remove the pulp. Seeds are then dried in direct sun to the required moisture content of about 10% and cleaned by hand sorting to remove debris.

Number of seeds per kilogram

There are between 300 - 500 seeds per kilogram of clean seed.

Seed storage

Sclerocarya birrea seed can be stored in airtight containers (plastic containers, kilner jars, and aluminium packets) in cool dry place for up to 1 year with no significant loss of viability.

Seed sowing and germination

The only treatment involved in improving germination of *Sclerocarya birrea* seed is the removal of the operculum (seed cap). Under ideal conditions, treated seeds germinate within 2 - 10 days after sowing. The expected germination rate of mature, healthy and properly treated seedlot is between 50 - 80%. The expected number of seedlings per kilogram of seed is 250.

Uses

Sclerocarya birrea is used for firewood, charcoal production, timber, poles, beehives, carvings, food (fruits), bee forage, soil conservation, fibre (bark) and shade.

Compiled by: Angaine P. M.