

Hallea stipulosa (Mitragyne stipulosa)

Rubiaceae

Indigenous

Trade names: Abura, nzingu.

Common names: **Kwamba:** Munyamaize **Luganda:** Nzingu **Luo:** Obul Madi: **Oo Runyoro:** Muho.

Ecology: One of 3 African Hallea timber trees, widespread from West to Central and East Africa. It is found in swamp forest in almost pure stands, sometimes on drier ground, at altitudes below *Hallea rubrostipulata*. In Uganda, it occurs in lowland swamp forests, usually waterlogged throughout the year, but also in seasonal swamp forests.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, timber (furniture), soil conservation.

Description: A tree to 30 m, the trunk usually crooked, sometimes with "knee roots" (which help aeration in the swamp) or with small blunt buttresses, fairly spreading to a round crown of large leaves. **BARK:** grey-brown, rough to smooth, irregularly cracked and flaking in plates. Branchlets 4-sided. **LEAVES:** opposite, **dark shiny green above**, usually hairy below at least on the veins, **broadly ovate about 20-30 cm long and 15-20 cm across**, tip rounded with 7-11 veins each side, often pinkish, a stalk about 3 cm. **Leafy green stipules at nodes, rounded 4-8 cm, stiff and thick with very many veins**, hairy at the base. **FLOWERS:** **yellow-white and tiny in round heads to 2.5 cm** across, on stalks 4-20 cm, the flowering branch to 20 cm with **3-10 heads and leafy bracts on the stalks**. Small, stiff bracts grow among the flowers which are fragrant, the tiny **calyx NOT lobed**, style just hanging out. **FRUIT:** dry capsules less than 1 cm in the fruit head, breaking to release tiny winged seeds.

Propagation: Wildings are profuse under mother trees; seedlings, root suckers.
Seed: Seed is difficult to collect. Collect mature flower heads then dry on polythene sheeting in the sun. The tiny seeds can then be collected as the capsules split open.

treatment: not necessary.

storage: in sealed containers in a cool place.

Management: Coppices while young; pollarding.

Remarks: This is an important tree for soil and water conservation. The wood is soft, easy to saw and durable in water. It is exported commercially from Nigeria as abura. Because it is a plain wood it is easy to stain to match more popular woods and excellent for mouldings.

