

Strychnos henningsii

Loganiaceae



Indigenous

Eng: *Coffee-bean strychnos*

Sm: *Hadesa*

Ecology

Found in Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia south to South Africa in dry forests, along riverbanks, in scrub as well as coastal forests. In Ethiopia, it is a small shrubby tree found in Dry and Moist Kolla and Weyna Dega agroclimatic zones of Ilubabor, Sidamo and Bale, m. 500–1,850 m.

Uses

Firewood, posts, tool handles, medicine (roots, fruit, bark), live fence.

Description

A very variable tree, usually dense and rounded to 5 m, occasionally to 20 m. BARK: Pale grey-brown then darker. LEAVES: Leathery, shiny above, quite sticky, broadly oval to 6 cm, 3 strong veins from the base and net veins clear also, tip usually sharp. Each pair of leaves at right angles to the next pair along the stem. FLOWERS: Small, cream-yellow, in dense heads. FRUIT: Round, fleshy orange then purple about 1 cm, the thin pulp containing 1–2 seeds, each grooved like a coffee bean.

Propagation

Seedlings.

Seed

Treatment: Pulp should be removed from the seeds before sowing.

Storage: Can be stored for some time.

Management

Produces root suckers. Coppicing, pruning.

Remarks

Heavy, termite-resistant and durable heartwood which makes it good for fence posts. Bark and fruit contain bitter alkaloids.



Photo: Patrick Maundu

