

Indigenous

Common names: Runyoro: Rwata.

Ecology: An understory forest tree from West Africa to Zaire and Angola and in the coastal strip of Kenya and Tanzania. It is found in forests, beside rivers and lakes, often in shallow soils. In Uganda, it occurs in thickets and at forest edges, e.g. Kibale Forest.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, poles, food (fruit), shade.

Description: A shrub to 4 m or a tree to 13 m, trunk slightly fluted, often deciduous and flowering with young leaf growth; branchlets with yellow-rusty brown hairs which are found on many other parts of the plant. **BARK:** smooth, light grey with shallow grooves and small pieces flaking off with age. **LEAVES: compound and opposite with 3-7 digitate leaflets** (like fingers) unequal in size, the **largest 5-14 cm**, with a long pointed tip, the upper surface dull with few hairs but the **lower surface with rusty hairs and clear veins**, leaflets stalked to 1 cm long but a **long hairy leaf stalk up to 12 cm**. **FLOWERS:** in dense heads beside leaves, on stalks to 5 cm, with narrow leafy bracts, calyx and outside petals **all hairy. Small tubular flowers about 1 cm long have 1 blue-violet lobe and 4 white lobes**, the throat hairy and sometimes yellow. **FRUIT:** rounded and fleshy, green with white spots turning **shiny black when ripe, to 4 cm long, edible**. The calyx enlarges in fruit.

Propagation: Direct sowing on site, wildings and seedlings.

Seed: Whole fruits are collected and thoroughly dried. The dry pulp is shaken off leaving the seed,

treatment: not necessary,

storage: store in a dry cool place.

Management: Coppicing, pollarding.

Remarks: Would do well intercropped for shade in coffee and tea plantations. The subspecies *ferruginea* grows in Uganda and has more spreading hairs and longer narrow leaflets.

