

Leaflet No. 53

Tree Seed Information Leaflet



Berchemia discolor

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Kenya Forestry Research Institute

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Species: *Berchemia discolor* (Klotzsch) Hemsl.

Family: Rhamnaceae

English name: Bird plum, Wild almond

Local names: Kisaaya (Kamba)

Muthwana (Mbeere, Tharaka)

Jajab (Orma, Borana)

Mkulu, Mnago (Swahili)

Kor'guba (Somali)

Emeyan (Turkana)

Muchukwo (Pokot)

Description

Berchemia discolor is an indigenous, semi deciduous shrub or a tree growing to a height of 3 to 20 m. The species has erect spreading branches making a heavy rounded crown. The bark is grey-black, cracking and scaly with corky spots on young branches. Leaves are shiny, dark green, sticky when young with prominent lateral veins and reddish petiole and midrib. Flowers are small yellow green, stalked in loose clusters. Fruits are oval, tapering towards the tip, 1 - 2 cm long, green and turning yellow to reddish brown when ripe, containing 1 - 2 flat seeds.

Distribution

Berchemia discolor grows in arid and semi arid areas from 0-1,600 m above sea level usually on sandy, rocky and alluvial soils. The species is found mainly in Rift Valley, Eastern (Machakos, Makueni and Kitui) and Coastal regions of Kenya.

Flowering and fruiting

Flowering occurs in February to March. Pollination is done by insects. Fruit maturity takes 6 - 8 months. Seeds can be collected from August to October.

Seed collection method

The mature reddish brown fruits are collected from the crown by hand picking or by spreading a canvas or a net under the tree and shaking the branches with hooks to release the ripe fruits.

Seed extraction, drying and cleaning

The mature fruits are de-pulped by squeezing or rubbing gently on a wire mesh or screen and washing in running water to remove the mucilage. Seeds are then sun dried to the required moisture content of less than 10%. Seeds are cleaned by separating the unwanted materials such as twigs, leaves and broken seeds by hand sorting. A purity of 98% can be achieved.

Seed storage

Berchemia discolor seed can be stored in airtight containers (plastic containers, kilner jars, and aluminium packets) in a cool dry place for up to 1 year without significant loss of viability.

Number of seeds per kilogram

There are 2,300 - 3,500 seeds per kilogram of clean seed.

Seed sowing and germination

Pre-sowing treatment is not necessary. Under ideal conditions *Berchemia discolor* seed germinate within 30 - 50 days of sowing. The average germination rate of a mature and healthy seed lot is 20 - 40%. The expected number of seedlings per kilogram of seed is 800.

Uses

Berchemia discolor is used for firewood, charcoal production, food (fruits), bee forage, fodder, medicine, soil conservation, wind break, shade and ornamental purposes.

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