

Leaflet No. 57

Tree Seed Information Leaflet



Olea capensis

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Species: *Olea capensis* L. subsp. *welwitschii* (Knobl.) Friis & P.S.

Family: Oleaceae

English name: East African olive, Elgon olive

Local names: Muriuntui (Meru)

Mutukuyu (Luhya)

Ol-loliondo (Maasai)

Musat (Marakwet)

Masgat (Saboat)

Description

Olea capensis is an indigenous large tree growing up to 25 m high with a straight bole, occasionally buttressed. Bark is pale grey to almost whitish and rough. Leaves are shiny above and dull green below with long tips. Flowers are white or pale yellow. Mature fruits are purple, oval with pointed apex, about 1 cm long.

Distribution

Olea capensis occurs in wet and dry upland forests between 1,150 and 2,250 m above sea level. The Elgon olive is mainly found on the slopes of Mt. Elgon, Kakamega forest and in Lake Victoria Basin.

Flowering and fruiting

Flowering occurs from October to November. Pollination is done by insects and fruits take 8 - 10 months to mature. Seeds can be collected between July and August.

Seed collection method

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

Seed extraction, cleaning and drying

Fruits are de-pulped using pestle and mortar to extract the seeds and then washed in running water to remove the extra pulp. Seeds are then dried in direct sun to the required moisture content of about 10% and then cleaned by hand sorting to remove debris. A purity of 90% can be achieved.

Number of seeds per kilogram

There are between 3,000 - 4,000 seeds per kilogram of clean seed.

Seed storage

Olea capensis 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

Cracking the seed coat with hammer or table vice improves germination. Under ideal conditions *Olea capensis* seed germinate within 35 - 90 days after sowing. The expected germination rate of mature, healthy and properly treated seedlot is between 40 - 60%. The expected number of seedlings per kilogram of seed is 2,500.

Uses

Olea capensis is used for timber, firewood, charcoal, veneer, bee forage, medicine and gum.

Compiled by: Angaine P. M.