

## *Bridelia micrantha*

## Euphorbiaceae

Indigenous

**Nyanja:** Mlebezi, mnazi, msongamino, mpasa

**Senga:** Msongamino

**Ecology:** A tree of the high-potential areas in East and Southern Africa. It is a riverine tree found at forest edges or in open woodland, 0–2,200 m. Only a few trees can be seen in Eastern Province, usually riverine. It does well in a variety of climatic zones.

**Uses:** **Firewood, timber** (tool handles), poles, **food** (fruit), medicine (leaves, root, bark), fodder (fruit, leaves), shade, dye (fruit, wood chips, bark).

**Description:** A leafy, evergreen tree to 15 m, with a dense spreading crown. **BARK:** grey-brown, flaking with age. **LEAVES:** appear compound but grow alternately, somewhat zigzag, along branches. Leaves shiny, to 12 cm, **veins parallel, each one extending along the leaf margin**. **FLOWERS:** small, cream, in clusters. **FRUIT:** very small, less than 1 cm, soft and purple, edible and sweet when ripe, November–January. Fruit only found on female trees.

**Propagation:** Seedlings, wildings.

**Seed:** A prolific seeder. No. of seeds per kg: 19,000–19,500. Germination is very good and uniform, up to 100%, after 20–25 days.

**treatment:** Use fresh seed. No pre-treatment.

**storage:** Avoid storage (the seeds are oily therefore have a short viability period).

**Management:** Coppicing, pollarding.

**Remarks:** Wood is resistant to termites and makes excellent firewood. The timber polishes well and makes fine furniture. The roots are crushed and used for treating stomach-ache, tapeworm, diarrhoea, headaches and painful joints. The leaf sap is used for sore eyes. The sweet fruits are readily eaten by children. Goats eat the bark and leaves. A paste made of pounded bark has been used to seal cracks in doors, baskets and pottery.

