

Milicia excelsa (Chlorophora excelsa)

Moraceae

Indigenous

Common names: Chag: mrie; **Eng:** iroko (West Africa), mvule (East Africa); Haya: muzuli, mwuli; **Hehe:** mpugusi; **Lugu:** mvule, mwule; Mwera: mtalula; Nyak: mwale; **Swah:** mvule; **Zigua:** mzule; **Zinza:** msule.

Ecology: A giant deciduous tree of lowland forest and wet savannah that is logged commercially throughout its range. Widespread throughout tropical Africa, Ivory Coast to Angola, Sudan to Mozambique. Very common in wetter lowlands of Tanzania, at the coast, and in areas around Lake Nyasa and Lake Victoria. It can grow well with mean annual rainfall as low as 700 mm provided it has access to extra water from a perennial stream or underground. It does not tolerate waterlogging and the soils must be well drained and relatively fertile.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, timber (furniture, boats), shade, ornamental, mulch.

Description: Old trees may have a **straight trunk clear to 21 m** and **2 m** in **diameter**. The high umbrella crown grows from a few thick branches. Ultimate branches hang down. **BARK:** thick, pale, grey then brown, exudes slightly milky sap, as do the leaves. **LEAVES:** large, **oval to 18 cm**, rather thin, a clearly pointed tip, 10-18 pairs clear side veins, base rounded, often unequal sided, stalk to 4 cm, **leaf edge finely toothed and wavy**. **FLOWERS:** trees are male or female, both with small flowers in spikes, **male flowers in drooping catkins to 15 cm**, female shorter and thicker. **FRUIT:** like a long, green mulberry, 6-7 cm, the soft pulp attracting birds and bats. Fruits ferment rapidly on the ground. Small hard seeds in pulp.

Propagation Seedlings, stumps.

Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: about 475,000. The tree is not a prolific seeder and careful seed collection is needed. Germination is slow and poor, up to 45% in 45-60 days.

treatment: not necessary.

storage: seed loses viability quickly.

Management: Fast growing compared to other hardwood species. The rotation period is 100 years.

Remarks: The wood is hard, durable, termite resistant and resembles teak. Therefore it is highly valuable timber used especially for quality indoor and outdoor furniture. It is a reserved tree in Tanzania and cannot be felled without a licence. Tea estates are now required to leave the tree within their tea plantations.

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