

FEVER TREE

Fever tree, African Thorn Acacia, Sulphur Bark, Mukonge, Arbre à Fièvre, Naivasha Thorn Tree

Acacia xanthophloea

Leguminosae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

Fever tree is found in eastern and southern Africa. It is a medium sized tree, up to 25 m tall with smooth bark that is yellow greenish in color. Its spreading branches possess thorns up to 7 cm long. Feathery, compound leaves allow sunlight to filter through its open canopy. Flowers are yellow and fragrant. The name fever tree comes from the mistaken idea that the tree caused malaria due to its presence in swampy mosquito infested areas.

Uses

The wood is used for construction, firewood, and charcoal. Flowers produce good bee forage. Leafy branches can be fed to livestock. Bark is used for medicinal purposes. It fixes nitrogen in the soil.

Cultivation

- **Elevation** – Up to 2100 m
- **Rainfall** – 300-1000 mm; located in swampy low-lying areas
- **Soil Types** – widely distributed
- **Temperature Range** – up to about 34° C; intolerant of frost
- **Day Length Sensitivity** – Not a significant factor
- **Light** – Prefers full sun

One of several ways to speed germination is to soak the seeds in water for 24 hours before sowing in seed trays. Doing so should result in germination within two weeks. Six to eight weeks after sowing, when seedlings have at least two leaves, transplant seedlings into nursery bags filled with a mix of soil and manure. For best survival, transplant to the field at the beginning of the rainy season. For charcoal production, aim for a final spacing of at least 2 X 2 m. Weed as needed until the canopy is established. Trees grow quickly, at a rate of 1.5 m each year.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Seeds are quickly eaten by wildlife, requiring timely harvest. Boots and gloves are recommended for safe harvest of seeds or timber, due to the thorns. Regrowth occurs from the stumps of cut trees; keep up to four dominant branches.

Pests and Diseases

The wood is susceptible to termites and wood borers.

Cooking and Nutrition

Inedible, except possibly gum that occurs on the trunk.

References

Odour, N.M., W.Ngugi, and T. wa Gathui (Editors: E. Bloomfield, K. Welford, and H. Wanjiru). 2012. [Acacia Pocketbook](#). Practical Action Consulting East Africa

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