

AFRICAN MAHOGANY

Red Mahogany, Nyasaland Mahogany, Manyama

Khaya nyasica

Meliaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

This evergreen or semi-deciduous forest tree is native to Malawi (formerly Nyasaland), Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Democratic Republic of Congo and now is grown in various other African countries. It is a fast growing tree and can grow to be a large tree, 45-60 m (75-100 ft) with a rounded crown providing dense shade. Its bark is grey to brown and flakes off in scales.

Origin

Khaya nyasica is native to Malawi (formerly Nyasaland), Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Democratic Republic of Congo.

Uses

It is an important timber species, used for furniture, firewood, tools, framing, paneling and veneer. Large logs are used to make dugout canoes. The wood is suitable for firewood. An infusion of the bark is said to relieve colds and oil from the seeds is reported to kill head lice. It is often grown to provide shade for coffee.

Cultivation

- Elevation: 0-1400m (4600ft)
- Rainfall: 600-1600mm (24-32 in)
- Temperature: 18-28 C (64-82 F) frost sensitive
- Soil: Grows best on moist, well-drained, deep alluvial soils. *K. nyasica* grows best on terraces, gently sloping riverbeds and at margins of floodplains. It also does not compete well with weeds, grass or brush.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The tree flowers at the end of the dry season or beginning of the wet season. The seeds are winged and travel by wind. Seed capsules are cut and dried in the sun until they split, then hand shelled. The seeds are often already attacked by insects while they are still on the tree, and undamaged seeds should therefore be selected before sowing or storage. Germination of fresh seed, kept in a very cool environment is high, and can be stored for up to a year in these conditions. Seeds can germinate in full sun as well as in the shade, but natural regeneration may be very sparse in the forest. The seeds can be directly sown in the shade in pots and can be planted in the ground with partial shade after about one year when they are 30-50 cm in height. The wood of this mahogany is soft and easy to work with. It is slightly red and will polish easily to a beautiful shine. It coppices poorly.

Pests and Diseases

This tree is resistant to the mahogany borer but its shoots are not immune to the *Hypsipyla robusta* which causes the tree to fork and slow down its growth when shoots are destroyed. Silvicultural techniques, such as overhead shading of saplings, mixed planting and removal of lateral shoots, can reduce damage by shoot borers. Seeds are commonly attacked by seed-boring beetles and eaten by small rodents. Animals, especially rodents will browse on the tender tips of saplings.