

SILVER TERMINALIA, SILVER CLUSTERLEAF

Silver Terminalia, Silver Clusterleaf

Terminalia sericea

Combretaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

A medium height, deciduous shrub or small tree generally 5-6 m (16.5-20 ft) tall, but reported as tall as 12-23 m (40-75 ft). *T. sericea* originates from the open woodland of the bushveld in the savannas of the Kalahari in southern Africa. *T. sericea* prefers well-drained, sandy soils of tropical to subtropical regions. A single trunk supports a well-rounded, densely-leafed crown. The dark gray bark is thick, deeply fissured and often peels. The long, narrow leaves are silvery to grey-green on both surfaces, tapering at each end. A layer of fine hairs covers each leaf, giving the tree its silvery appearance. Flowers borne in Spring are each made up of many cream to yellow-colored florets arranged along a central axis, and have an unpleasant scent which attracts flies for pollination.

Uses

Valued for its strength of grain, workability and durability, the yellow wood of *T. sericea* is used in the fabrication of wagon parts, furniture, bridges, mine props, railway sleepers, stockades, fence posts, and telegraph poles. An added bonus is its resistance to termites and borers. In Botswana, the soft silvery hairs on the leaves are used to glaze pottery. Cattle and game browse on the leaves. The roots and leaves are used for medicinal purposes, and the tree itself is used for erosion control, soil enrichment, shading out weeds and draining waterlogged soils.

Cultivation

An easily-established, aggressive species, propagated readily by seed, *T. sericea* grows naturally at elevations of 350 m -1500 m (1150 ft - 5000 ft), and is adaptable to a range of soil types, moisture conditions and drainage conditions, as long as it receives plenty of light. *T. sericea* will withstand light frosts, though optimal growth temperature range is -3° C to +45° C (27° to 113° F).

Harvesting and Seed Production

The central swollen section of the fruit is ringed with a single, wide, flattened 'wing' or 'keel' and encloses a single seed. As the fruit grows, it changes from green to red at maturity, finally turning brown. Harvest the seed pods when they are dry, either from the plant or the ground. Place them in the shade to complete drying. Shell (if desired) and store in closed containers in a cool place.

Cooking and Nutrition

T. sericea is not for human consumption, although decoctions of the bark, roots or leaves have been used to alleviate stomach disorders including diarrhea. In Asia and Africa, the anti-bacterial properties of *T. sericea* have been used for treatment of skin ailments, and there is research into using the leaves as treatment against HIV/AIDS. During the rainy season, cattle, game and the larvae of the Emperor Moth (Mopane worms, *Imbrasia belina*) feed on the leaves. The larvae are an important food source during this time of year.

References

Orwa C, Mutua A, Kindt R, Jamnadass R, Simons A. 2009. Agroforestry Database: a tree reference and selection guide version 4.0 (http://www.worldagroforestry.org/treedb2/AFTPDFS/Terminalia_sericea.PDF)

African Plant Database (<http://www.ville-ge.ch/musinfo/bd/cjb/africa/details.php?langue=en&id=690>)