

**Zanthoxylum gilletii** (*Fagara macrophylla*)

Rutaceae

**Indigenous****STANDARD/TRADE NAME:** African satinwood.**COMMON NAMES:** **English:** East African satinwood; **Kikuyu:** Muchagatha; **Kipsigis:** Sagawoita; **Luhya:** Shikhuma; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumusikhu; **Luo:** Sogo maita; **Nandi:** Sagawoita; **Ogiek:** Kikomit.**DESCRIPTION:** A deciduous forest tree 10–30 m with a **straight trunk** and clear bole up to 15 m, diameter 30–90 cm, crown spreading. **Young stems armed with straight or recurved spines.** **BARK:** Smooth, grey, with **spiny woody cones**, 1–3 cm, often inconspicuous on old trees. **LEAVES:** In terminal clusters, leaf stalks and branchlets with prickles to 1 cm, 6–13 pairs of stiff leaflets plus one terminal one, **large, 14–30 cm long, the tip suddenly pointed, base one-sided or rounded**, gland dots numerous but small, sometimes a few prickles on the midrib, leaf edge smooth, occasionally round-toothed. **FLOWERS:** Cream-white, male and female, small, in **terminal pyramid clusters 20–30 cm long.** **FRUIT:** Rounded and red, 4–6 mm, with **one shiny black oily seed** tasting like peppermint.**ECOLOGY:** A large rainforest tree occurring from West Africa into Sudan, and throughout eastern Africa south to Angola and Zimbabwe, where it has been used in the timber trade. Mainly found in western Kenya. Unlike *Z. usambarensis*, this species is confined to moist forests at 1,500–2,300 m. Agroclimatic Zone II.**USES:** Firewood, charcoal, timber (heavy construction), furniture, boat building, medicine (bark).**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings, wildings.**SEED:** Pick the red-brown fruit from the tree before the capsules open and dry in the sun for 1–2 days, then shake out the seed. But the seed should not stay exposed to the sun.**treatment:** Not necessary.**storage:** Seed can be stored up to 2 months. Susceptible to insect attack, so add ash.**MANAGEMENT:** Fairly fast growing.**REMARKS:** A timber tree widely planted in the highlands.The timber is heavy, yellow-white, sweet scented, tough and easily worked. Durable in the ground. The trade name 'satinwood' comes from the bright shiny appearance of the polished wood. The bark is used to treat cough. Several other less commonly used *Zanthoxylum* species are found in Kenya. The most notable of these are *Z. mildbraedii* (**Luhya:** Simbari), a tree to 30 m found in Kakamega Forest, and *Z. rubescens* (**Luhya:** Shungoma, Shigulutsu), a tree to 10 m also found in Kakamega Forest. All are aromatic and have spiny cones on the bark and fruits that are similar to one another.**FURTHER READING:** Albrecht, 1993; Beentje, 1994; Dharani, 2002; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990.