

Leaflet No. 24

Tree Seed Information Leaflet



Croton macrostachyus



Kenya Forestry Research Institute

June 2009

Species: *Croton macrostachyus* Del.

Family: Euphorbiaceae

Common name: Broad-leaved croton

Local name: Mutundu (Kikuyu)

Mutuntu (Meru)

Kitundu (Kamba)

Musutsu (Luhya)

Tebesuet (Nandi)

OI kaparlu (Masaai)

Description: *Croton macrostachyus* is a deciduous (sheds leaves part of the year) tree growing up to a height of 25m with rounded, open crown and large spreading branches. The bark is greyish and fairly smooth. Leaves are heart shaped with prominent veins on long stalks turning orange before shedding. Flowers are cream yellow in erect spikes. The fruits are pale grey, pea-sized with 3 lobed capsules, splitting open to release 3 shiny grey seeds.

Distribution: It is widely distributed in both moist and dry evergreen upland forests, riverline forests, wooded grassland and bushland between 1350 and 2250m above sea level.

Flowering and fruit development: Flowering period varies in different regions from April to September. Pollination is by insects and seed maturity takes 3 to 5 months. Seed collection period is between August and February depending on the area.

Seed collection method: Mature grey-brown fruits are collected from crown of standing trees by spreading a net or canvas under the tree and shaking the branches using long forked hooks to release the fruits.

Seed extraction, drying and cleaning: Capsules (fruits) are sun dried and turned regularly to release the seeds. Seeds are cleaned by hand sorting and sun dried to the required moisture content of about 10% for storage or distribution.

Number of seeds per kg: There are 16,000 to 25,000 seeds depending on the provenance and weather of the seeding season.

Seed storage: Seeds can be stored in airtight containers (glass or plastic jars, or aluminium packets) in a cool dry place for a period of up to 2 years with no significant loss of viability.

Seed sowing and germination: Pre-sowing treatment is not necessary. Seeds germinate within 14 to 20 days after sowing. The expected germination rate of mature and healthy seed ranges from 30 to 60%. The expected number of seedlings per kg of seed is about 8,000.

Seeds are sown by broadcasting thinly and evenly on a seedbed containing sand or a mixture of sand and soil. They are then covered with a thin layer of soil. The seedbed is then covered with a light mulch (dry grass) to keep it moist. Watering is done regularly (morning and evening) checking daily for any emergent seedling. Mulch is removed immediately germination starts. The young seedlings are transplanted (pricked out) when they are large enough to handle (4-5 leaves). Transplanting can be to polythene tubes or other potting container filled with soil. Seedlings are planted out after 4 to 6 months when they are about 30cm tall.

Uses: *Croton macrostachyus* is used for timber, fuelwood, poles, medicine, bee forage, mulch and green manure. It is suitable for intercropping (agroforestry).



For more information contact

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