

Bombax buonopozense (B. reflexum)

Bombacaceae

Indigenous

Common names: **English:** Red silk cotton, wild kapok, wild silk cotton **Kwamba:** Kitutube, bulanka **Rukonjo:** Mulungula **Runyoro:** Mulimbi.

Ecology: A tree of tropical rain forest extending into West Africa. It occurs in the Semliki, Maramagambo, Bugoma and Budongo Forests of Uganda, in the swamp forests around Lake Victoria and only rarely on drier sites.

Uses: Ornamental (avenue), fibres (kapok).

Description: A deciduous forest tree 45-75 m, the straight bole reaching up to a narrow crown has short buttresses at the base. The **trunk is armed with large conical woody spines**, black-tipped on the younger branches which are generally whorled. **BARK:** smooth, silvery or grey-green becoming rough and scaly, dark and fissured. When cut the bark is deep red, with large lenticels (breathing pores) in vertical lines. **LEAVES: compound digitate with 5-7 leaflets**, narrow-oval and pointed, variable, about 14 cm (up to 20 cm) on a leaf stalk 5-20 cm. **FLOWERS: solitary and bright red**, appearing on the bare tree, held erect all along the branches, the green calyx saucer-shaped, 5 red petals hairy inside and a central mass of black stamens. **FRUIT: a 5-part woody capsule to 15 cm** long hangs down on a thick stalk. Inside numerous seeds are surrounded by **grey-white fluffy kapok**.

Propagation: Seedlings (sow seed in pots) and direct sowing on site.

Seed: Seeds embedded in cotton-like fibres can be collected from the ground.

treatment: separate seeds from fibres.

storage: store seeds in a cool dry place.

Management: Fast growing.

Remarks: A tree not yet in general use but which could be promoted more for its potential both as a showy avenue tree and for its useful kapok. The fibres are similar but inferior to the kapok of commerce (*Ceiba pentandra*).

