

Dombeya torrida* subsp. *torrida

(*D. goetzenii*)

Sterculiaceae

Indigenous

Am: *Wulkeffa*

Or: *Danissa*

Tg: *Sonkuah*

Ecology

An under-storey timber tree of wetter highland forests of East Africa and Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, it is common in the semi-humid highland woodlands and forests with *Juniperus*, *Arundinaria*, *Hagenia*, *Celtis*, *Podocarpus* and *Olea capensis*. It grows in all regions in Dry, Moist and Wet Weyna Dega, Moist and Wet Dega and Moist Wurch agroclimatic zones, 1,600–3,400 m.

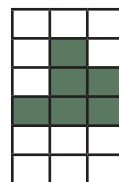
Uses

Firewood, timber (house construction, turnery), poles, farm tools, bee forage, mulch, soil improvement, string, cloth (bark).

Description

A shrub or much-branched tree, 12–15 m, with a shady umbrella crown and a trunk diameter about 50 cm. BARK: Grey and smooth, only lightly grooved with age; clear breathing pores (lenticels); inner bark thick, orange-brown, very fibrous. LEAVES: Large, hairy and heart-shaped, the leaf bases overlapping, to 30 cm long, tip pointed, edge sharply toothed, vein network very clear below with 5 or more veins radiating from the centre. Young stems and leaf stalks often red. FLOWERS: Often abundant,

pale pink or white, full of nectar, in showy clusters on branched hairy stalks to 30 cm, calyx of 5 hairy sepals, 5 petals rounded but one-sided, red-purple in centre; many stamens with orange anthers; 5 pink stigma. Petals remain around the fruit, turning yellow-brown as they dry. FRUIT: Oval capsules to 1 cm, densely hairy, about 10 small brown seeds inside.



Propagation

Seedlings.

Seed

About 235,000 seeds per kg. Under good conditions, the seed will germinate in 15–20 days. After drying the capsules in the sun for 2–3 days, the seed can be separated from the dried capsules by rubbing or by threshing the capsules lightly in a bag. The latter method is recommended because the fine hairs of the fruit may irritate the eyes.

Treatment: Not necessary.

Storage: Seed can be stored in airtight containers.

Management

Coppicing, lopping, pollarding.

Remarks

Bark fibre may be used to make cloth or string. The tree is considered a good place for beehives because it produces some of the best nectar. High-quality soil may be found below as fallen leaves produce rich mulch. The timber is soft and lightweight but strong, and easy to saw and plane. The heartwood is dark brown but the rest of the wood is uniformly pale.

