PLANT FACT SHEET

# *Colophospermum mopane* (Kirk ex Benth.) Kirk ex J. Leonard

**GENUS** *Colophospermum* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

**COMMON NAMES** Rhodesian ironwood, Rhodesian mahogany

## EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

**Edible parts:** Seeds, Gum

An edible insect the mopane worm occurs on this tree.

## DESCRIPTION

A shrub or tree. It grows 1-30 m high. It loses many leaves during the year. It can have one or many stems. The crown is round. The bark is thick and fibrous. It is dark grey and has deep cracks along it. The leaves are alternate and have 2 leaflets. The leaf stalk is 2-4 cm long. The leaflets do not have stalks. The leaves are like butterfly wings. There are 7-12 veins from the base. The leaves smell of turpentine when crushed. The flowers are in short panicles in the axils of leaves. They are whitish-green. The fruit is a flattened pod. It is almost kidney shaped.

## HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in the lowlands. It grows in hot arid places. It grows from 200-1,200 m altitude. Plants cannot stand cold. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall of 100-800 mm. It needs well-drained soil. It can grow in arid places.

## PRODUCTION

### Cultivation

Plants are grown from seeds. The seeds are planted while still in the pod. They are planted shallowly just showing above ground. They germinate in 1-2 weeks. Seeds can be stored for up to 3 years.

### Harvesting and Seed Production

It grows slowly.

## NOTES

It is a host for mopane worms (Imbrasia belina) which are eaten.
Also as Caesalpinaceae.

## PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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