

Lannea microcarpa

+ Synonyms

Engl. & K.Krause

Anacardiaceae

Common Name:

General Information

Lannea microcarpa is a deciduous tree with a very dense, hemispherical crown; it can grow up to 16 metres tall. The bole can be 60cm in diameter[[332](#), [774](#)].

The tree has a range of uses, being harvested from the wild to provide food, medicines, fibre, dyestuff and fuel for the local people. Because it provides a good shade, and a nutritious crop of food, the tree is typically protected when farmers clear the forest for agriculture[[323](#)]. Some forms are occasionally cultivated as fruit tree in tropical W Africa[[317](#), [323](#)].

Known Hazards

None known

Botanical References

[736](#)




Range

West tropical Africa - Senegal to Cameroon.

Habitat

Savannah vegetation[[299](#), [736](#)].

Properties

Edibility Rating	
Medicinal Rating	
Other Uses Rating	
Habit	Deciduous Tree
Height	15.00 m
Self-fertile	No
Cultivation Status	Cultivated, Semi-cultivated, Wild

Cultivation Details

A plant of moist regions in the tropics, growing mainly in areas where the mean annual rainfall is in excess of 900mm[[325](#)].

The plant seems to prefer friable deep soils and is often found on cultivated land[[332](#)].

The tree has a thick bark which gives it an above-average resistance to bush fires[[774](#)].

A dioecious species, both male and female forms need to be grown if fruit and seed are required[[299](#)].

Edible Uses



Fruits being sold in a local market

Photograph by: [TREEAID](#)





Fruit - raw or dried[317, 332]. It can be dried and used like raisins[323]. A fermented drink is made from them[332]. A sweet beverage is made from the cooked fruits[774]. The purplish-black, ellipsoid fruit is about 15mm long[299].

Young leaves - cooked and eaten as a vegetable[299, 317, 332, 774]. Nutritious[323].

The bark has a sweet smell and contains a gum which is soluble in water and is edible[299, 332]. The gum exudes naturally when the bark is damaged[323].

Medicinal

The dried, pulverized aerial parts of the plant are rubbed into scarifications to treat pain between the ribs and are taken internally against colic[299].

A leaf decoction is drunk to treat swellings; it is also added to a bath[299].
The leaves are used as a dressing for wounds[299].

The wood ash is applied to mature abscesses[299].

The leaves have medicinal use as those of *L. Acida* but are considered to be less active[332]. These uses are as follows:-

The bark is used internally in the treatment of stomach troubles, beriberi, schistosomiasis and haemorrhoids[332]. Combined with other plants, it is used to treat dysentery and sterility[332].

Applied externally, it is used to treat eye-troubles[332].

Vapour from a bark-decoction is inhaled into the mouth to treat dental caries and buccal infections[332].

The root bark is considered good for treating skin-infections. It is used in baths and lotions for blotches, herpes, etc., and a similar preparation is taken internally after 4 - 5 hours fermentation for gonorrhoea[332].

The powdered root, mixed with salt, is made into a tampon for application to the scrotum in treating orchitis[332].

Sap obtained from pounding the bark is given to epileptics and to persons subject to giddiness and fainting[332].

The leaves are astringent and are used in Senegal for toothache[332].

The kernel is purgative[332].

Other Uses

The seed comprises a thin shell surrounding a kernel, whose copious oil is sometimes used to make soap or skincare products[317, 323].

The bark is fibrous, and is used to make cordage[299, 332, 774].

The bark is used to dye cotton textiles a red-brown colour[299]. It is one of the main plants used in the production of the cloths called 'basilan fini' (medicine applied on cloth), widely associated with the notion of healing, since the decoction of the plant is both medicinal and dyes the colour of blood[299]. Garments made with this dye have traditionally been used as ceremonial robes at special occasions including hunting and war; to mark special stages of life such as circumcision, birth, menopause and death[299].

To make the dye, the bark is first pounded then boiled for 2 - 3 hours in water. Towards the end of this period a small ladleful of wood ash is added as mordant, resulting in a darker coloured liquid that is kept boiling strongly for about half an hour. After it has cooled down, the decoction is filtered and is then ready for use as a dye bath[299].

To obtain a faster colour, bogolan dyers associate this dye with a decoction of the bark of *Anogeissus leiocarpa*. The cotton cloth is plunged once into the *Lannea* dye-bath, then 3 times in the *Anogeissus* bath and finally once again in the *Lannea* bath. Between each dyeing, the cloth is dried in the sun. Subsequently the cloth is dyed using iron-rich mud of the bogolan technique. The dye is not very fast, except in the black parts of the design[299].

The sapwood is white, light and works easily, but deteriorates quickly[332]. It is used to make hoe handles[299].
The wood is used as a fuel and to make charcoal[299].

Propagation

Seed - no pre-treatment is required to germinate fresh seeds. However, the generally low germination responses are caused by the seed-coat imposed dormancy, not due to an impermeability of the endocarp to water. Scarification

and pre-soaking seeds before germination help improve their germination capacity[325]. Fresh seeds germinate readily at a temperature between 25 - 35°C, with 30°C being the optimum[325].

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