

# Mongongo

Formerly known as *Ricinodendron rautanenii*, the **mongongo tree** is a member of the [family Euphorbiaceae](#) and of the [monotypic genus Schinziophyton](#). A large, spreading tree, the mongongo reaches 15-20 metres tall. It is found on wooded hills and amongst sand dunes, and is associated with the [Kalahari](#) sand soil-types. The leaves are a distinctive hand-shape, and the pale yellow wood is similar in characteristics to [balsa](#), being both lightweight and strong. The yellowish flowers occur in slender, loose sprays.

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## Fruit

Known as **mongongo fruit**, **mongongo nut** or **manketti nut**, the egg-shaped, velvety fruits ripen and fall between March and May each year, and contain a thin layer of edible flesh around a thick, hard, pitted shell. Inside this shell is a highly nutritious nut.



Mongongo nut

## [\[edit\]](#) Distribution

The mongongo is distributed widely throughout southern [Africa](#). There are several distinct belts of distribution, the largest of which reaches from northern [Namibia](#) into northern [Botswana](#), south-western [Zambia](#) and western [Zimbabwe](#). Another belt is found in eastern [Malawi](#), and yet another in eastern [Mozambique](#).

## [\[edit\]](#) Traditional uses

So popular are the fruit and nuts of the mongongo tree that they have even been described as a "staple diet" in some areas (most notably amongst the San [bushmen](#) of northern [Botswana](#) and [Namibia](#)). Archaeological evidence has shown that they have been consumed amongst San communities for over 7,000 years. Their popularity stems in part from their flavour, and in part from the fact that they store well, and remain edible for much of the year.

Dry fruits are first steamed to soften the skins. After peeling, the fruits are then cooked in water until the maroon-coloured flesh separates from the hard inner nuts. The pulp is eaten, and the nuts are

saved to be roasted later. Alternatively, nuts are collected from elephant dung- the hard nut survives intact through the digestive process and elephant does the hard work of collecting the nuts.<sup>[1]</sup> During roasting of the nuts, direct contact with the fire is avoided, using sand to distribute the heat evenly. Once dry, the outer shell cracks easily, revealing the nut, encased within a soft, inner shell. The nuts are either eaten straight, or pounded as ingredients in other dishes.

The oil from the nuts has also been traditionally used as a body rub in the dry winter months, to clean and moisten the skin, while the hard, outer nut-shells are popular as divining "bones". The wood, being both strong and light, makes excellent fishing floats, toys, insulating material and drawing boards. More recently, it has been used to make dart-boards and packing cases.

### **[edit] Nutrition**

Per 100 grams shelled [nuts](#):

- 57 g [fat](#):
  - 44% polyunsaturated
  - 17% saturated
  - 18% monounsaturated
- 24 g [protein](#)
- 193 mg [calcium](#)
- 4 mg [zinc](#)
- 2.8 mg [copper](#)
- 565 mg [vitamin E](#) (and [tocopherol](#))

### **[edit] Mongongo in popular culture**

- Two [episodes](#) of the TV show *[Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip](#)* feature the mongongo fruit as a satirical addition to the [Fruit of the Loom](#) fruits, played as an angry black [militant](#) "who can't believe he's a fruit for underwear".<sup>[2][3]</sup>
- The [October 5, 2007 episode](#) of the TV show *[QI](#)* makes reference to the fact that mongongo nuts are found in elephant droppings.

### **[edit] References**

- <sup>**1.**</sup> ^ [THE MONGONGO/MANKETTI NUT - \*Ricinodendron rautanenii\* \(Schinziophyton rautanenii\)](#)
- <sup>**2.**</sup> ^ "Monday". [D. L. Hughley](#) as Simon Stiles/Mongongo Fruit. *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip*. NBC. 2007-01-22. No. 12, season 1. 7 minutes in.
- <sup>**3.**</sup> ^ "The Harriet Dinner (Part 1)". [Hughley](#) as Stiles/Mongongo Fruit. *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip*. NBC. 2007-01-29. No. 13, season 1. 15 minutes in.

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Categories: [Euphorbiaceae](#) | [Fruit](#) | [Fruits of the desert](#) | [Edible nuts and seeds](#) | [Drought tolerant trees](#)



### Mongongo Nut



### Scientific classification

Kingdom: [Plantae](#)  
 Division: [Magnoliophyta](#)  
 Class: [Magnoliopsida](#)  
 Order: [Malpighiales](#)  
 Family: [Euphorbiaceae](#)  
 Subfamily: [Crotonoideae](#)  
 Tribe: [Ricinodendreae](#)  
 Genus: ***Schinziophyton***  
           [Hutch.](#) ex  
           [Radcl.-Sm.](#)  
 Species: ***S. rautanenii***

### Binomial name

***Schinziophyton rautanenii***  
 ([Schinz](#)) [Radcl.-Sm.](#)



Mongongo seedling

Bron: Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongongo>