

Cassia is a medium sized perennial tree with smooth grey bark and light green foliage. The wood is termite resistant and it is a popular ornamental tree. There is some evidence that it can fix nitrogen making it suitable for planting in rows with other crops.

Synonyms: *Cassia humboldtiana*, *Cassia speciosa*, *Pseudocassia spectabilis*, *Senna spectabilis*.

Common names: Cassia, mwenu, mhomba, antsoan dilaw, scented shower.

Distribution: Cassia is native to Central America and the Northern regions of South America. It has also been introduced to much of Africa, including, Angola, Burundi, South Africa and much of East Africa.

Ecology

Rainfall: 800-2000mm, but a range of 100-3000mm has been recorded in the Philippines.

Temperature: 14-32°C.

Altitude: 0-2000m.

Soil type: Prefers soils that are deep, moist and sandy but will tolerate calcareous soils.



Botany

Height: Usually 10-12m but may reach up to 20m.

Crown: Spreading.

Flowers: Golden yellow, appearing in late summer and autumn.

Fruit: Long, cylindrical flattened pods that are green initially turning black once ripe.

Uses

Main: Shade, windbreaks, soil fertility improvement, mulching, fuel, tools and ornamental.

Others: The flowers are sought out by bees and the trees are used for shade.

Cultural instructions

Cassia can be grown vegetatively, from seedlings, direct sowing or by coppicing.

Seeds: There are approximately 39000 seeds/kg. The seeds can remain viable for several years in storage.

Pre-treatment: Place the seeds in boiling water and allow them to soak for 24 hours.

Germination: A germination rate of up to 60-90% can be achieved.

Management: Coppicing may be required because it can be fast growing on fertile soils.

Produced by the Tropical Advisory Service, December 2002

HDRA - the organic organisation, Ryton Organic Gardens Coventry, CV8 3LG, UK.
Tel: +44(0)24 7630 3517 Fax: +44(0)24 7663 9229 Email:ove-enquiry@hdra.org.uk www:
<http://www.hdra.org.uk>

This leaflet is a compilation of scientific research and farmers' experiences from various sources. A list of these sources and other publications on organic farming are available from HDRA. This material may be reproduced freely for non-profit making purposes.