

USES

PRODUCTS

Food: The bitter-tasting fresh fruit is eaten raw or used to make an alcoholic drink. A good quality jelly/jam can be cooked from the ripe fruit.

Fodder: The leaves are browsed by many plains game (kudu, nyala, bushbuck and grey duiker), and the ripe fruit is also an animal favourite.

Apiculture

Flowers produce a lot of nectar and therefore popular with bees. This makes the *Syzygium cordatum* a choice species in beekeeping.

Fuel: *Syzygium cordatum* is popular as a source of firewood and charcoal.

Timber: The light, reddish-brown to greyish wood is medium hard, heavy (750 kg/cubic m) and works well but should be water seasoned. It is used for good quality furniture, window frames, beams and rafters and, being durable in water, it is especially suitable for boat building.

Tannin or dyestuff: A blue dye can be obtained from the bark.

Medicine: Roots and bark are boiled and the decoction is used as a remedy for indigestion and giddiness; an extract of the leaves is used as a purgative or diarrhoea treatment. As a medicine, extracts of the plant are taken as remedies for stomachache, diarrhoea, respiratory ailments, tuberculosis, mild diabetes mellitus and glucose intolerance.



BENEFITS

Water berry is nutritionally-rich in vitamin A and iron. Vitamin A is important for good vision and a healthy immune system. Iron increases the quality of blood.

SERVICES

Erosion control: *Syzygium cordatum* can withstand extended periods of waterlogging and can be used to stabilize river and stream banks. This makes it a viable wetland rehabilitation species.

Shade or shelter: *Syzygium cordatum* provides the much-needed shade and shelter for domestic stock and game on the farm.

Ornamental: *Syzygium cordatum*, with its evergreen glossy leaves, abundant, creamish-white flowers and blackish fruit, is an asset to any garden.

Boundary or barrier or support: *Syzygium cordatum* makes an effective screen plant in a shrubbery.

Indicator of ground water: in rural areas, *Syzygium cordatum* is used as an indicator of ground water. It is useful in the siting of wells in rural areas.

Other services: Milk gourds are seasoned by the pleasantly aromatic wood smoke of *Syzygium cordatum*.

Growing *Syzygium cordatum*

The tree is best grown from seed.

- For better germination pre-treat seed with a pre-emergence fungicide, this will prevent seedlings from damping off before emerging above the soil.
- Sow seed in a seed tray filled with well-drained soil and cover seeds with a thin layer of soil. Water well and keep in a well-ventilated area.
- Pot seedlings into individual plant bags or pots at two leaf pairs before roots establish.



NO. 1 Orange Grove Drive, Highlands, Harare | (0242)-498436-9
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FORESTRY COMMISSION



ZIMBABWE TREE OF THE YEAR 2022

Botanical Name: *Syzygium cordatum*
Common English Name: Waterberry
Zita RechiShona: Mukute/Muhute/Muisu
Ibizo leSindebele: Umdoni/Imiswi



GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Syzygium cordatum is a medium-sized tree, achieving 6-15 (max. 20)m in height. Dwarf forms of the species 30-45 cm high at maturity have also been reported. The tree is evergreen and water loving, thus it is found in riverine and swampy.

DERIVATION OF THE BOTANICAL NAME

The genus name, 'Syzygium', is derived from the Greek word 'syngios' (paired), on account of the leaves and twigs that in several species grow at the same point; the specific name is the Latin word 'cordatus, meaning 'heart-shaped', in reference to the heart-shaped base of the leaves.

HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION

Occurs along stream banks. It is commonly found in riverine thickets and forests, always near water or along water courses. In some cases it forms stands of almost pure swamp forest. In Zimbabwe, the tree is found in all ecological regions, along major rivers.

SPECIES DESCRIPTION

Bark: Young trunks banded and blotched in grey and white, fairly smooth bark. In old trees the bark is dark brown, light grey or reddish, thick, rough, fissured and can be pulled off in thick, corklike, square pieces; young stems squarish with winged edges.

Leaves

Occur as opposite, sessile, successive pairs at right angles, elliptic, oblong to almost circular, crowded near the ends of branches. very many, near the ends of branches, thick, leathery, smooth, opposite, elliptic, oval or almost circular, up to 2.5-13 x 1.9-8 (17) cm, bluish-green on top, paler green under, gland dots inconspicuous; apex bluntly pointed to rounded; base round and notched; margin entire and often wavy; petiole absent or extremely short; midrib lateral with conspicuous net veins; usually stalkless but may occasionally have short stalks, in which case they may be confused with those of *Syzygium guineense*. New foliage is bright red in colour.

Flowers:

Creamy white to pinkish flowers bloom from August to December and are popular with bees and other insects, which are the pollinating agents. Flower buds open into sweetly scented flowers that yield excellent, abundant nectar. The petals fall early, leaving the stamens forming an airy puff which are the most conspicuous feature of the flowers.

Fruits and Seed

Fruit are an ovoid, fleshy berry, about 1.3-1.5 cm, slightly oblong, deep pink, purple or purple-black when mature. Inside the fruit is a single, whitish seed. *S. cordatum* hybridizes freely with *Syzygium guineense* and *Syzygium gerrardii* where they occur together. The fruits are eaten by numerous animal species that act as the dispersal agents for the seeds.

