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Page 256

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Notes on Indigenous Trees and Shrubs in S. Rhodesia

Securidaca longepedunculata. Fresn. (Polygalaceae)

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Securidaca longepedunculata. Fresn.
(Polygalaceae)

Common Name.—Violet tree. **Native Names.**—Mufufu, mufungwe (Chis.); umpfumfu, umfumfu (Sind.).

General Description.—The violet tree may be of a shrubby habit or a tree up to 30 feet high. When leafless it is easily recognised by its fairly smooth, light grey bark, the boles of old trees being often distinctly furrowed. The leaves, on hairy twigs, are simple, alternate, of an oval shape, and usually about 1-1½ inches in length. The leaf stalks are short and hairy, but the leaf blades have few hairs. There are no stipules. Numerous short, lateral shoots make the branches somewhat thorny. The racemes of flowers, which are to be seen during October and November on the short lateral branchlets, along with the new leaves, are of a reddish to magenta colour. They have a strong scent very similar to that of violets. The winged fruits, of a light yellow colour, when ripe towards the end of the dry season, and each with one seed, are reminiscent of the fruits of the sycamore tree.

Distribution.—As a scattered tree the violet tree is widely distributed in this Colony at medium and lower elevations, and is an associate of several types of tree vegetation.

It occurs elsewhere in Central Africa.

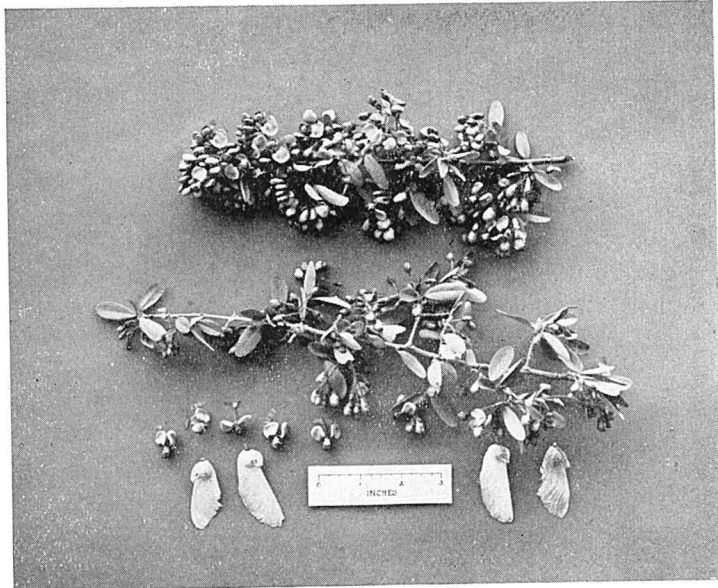
Uses.—The wood is used as fuel and to a limited extent as poles, but otherwise it has little value. It is white and easily recognised by rings of soft tissue. The roots are used by natives for the treatment of malaria. The bark provides a fibre. There is the possibility of expressing an oil from the sweetly scented flowers.

It is a delightful ornamental tree when in full bloom. Its flowers scent the air for a considerable distance around it. It can be raised fairly easily from seed. Germination is best when fruits have been on the trees for about a year. Good results have been obtained by soaking the fruits for a few days in water and then immediately planting them in prepared sites, lightly covering with a mulch of grass and keeping watered, but not over-watered, till the advent of the rains. They should be protected from frost when young.



Securidaca longepedunculata.
Habit photo.

[Photo. by A. A. Pardy.]



Securidaca longepedunculata.
Leaves, flowers and fruit.

[Photo. by A. A. Pardy.]