

RECORDED & INDEXED
D
Bulletin No. 1778

(Reprinted from "Rhodesia Agricultural Journal.")

Vol. 51, No. 4

July-August, 1954

Page 274

ISSUED BY AUTHORITY OF

The Minister of Agriculture and Lands

Notes on Indigenous Trees and Shrubs of S. Rhodesia

Swartzia madagascariensis. Desv.
(Papilionaceae)

By A. A. PARDY, Chief Research Officer, Forestry Commission.

SALISBURY :

PRINTED FOR THE GOVERNMENT STATIONERY OFFICE
BY THE ART PRINTING WORKS, LTD., SALISBURY.

Swartzia madagascariensis. Desv.

(Papilionaceae)

Common Names.—*Swartzia*, snake bean tree. **Native Names.**—Mucherechese, mucherekese, mudyamhembge, mutseketsa (Chis.); umtshakatsha, umtsheketshe (Sind.).

General Description.—This is usually a small and somewhat bushy tree commonly 12-20 feet in height. The leaves are alternate and pinnate, each leaf having 3-7 alternate leaflets. The short-stalked leaflets with notched ends are of an elliptical shape, the end leaflet being the largest. The leaf and leaflet stalks and undersurfaces of the leaflets have a dense covering of short brown hairs. Stipules are small. The sweet-scented, long-stalked flowers, which appear during October with the new leaves, are solitary or in few-flowered racemes. The sepals forming a cup are covered with short brown hairs. Each flower has only one large, crinkled, white petal. The pods, round in cross-section are fully $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch in diameter and vary in length up to 12 inches and, when mature, are hard shiny and of a dark reddish-brown colour. There are transverse portions immediately inside the pod containing gummy material. Each pod contains a number of small brown seeds which rattle in the mature pod. These pendulous snake- or vienna sausage-like pods are very conspicuous during the dry season. They do not split open. The bark is thick, rough, reticulate and of a reddish-brown colour.

Distribution.—The *swartzia* is common as a scattered tree at medium and lower elevations, and is associated with several tree types. It is fairly widely distributed in Central Africa and is found as far north as the Sudan.

Uses.—This tree is usually lacking in size and straightness to be of much use other than as firewood and charcoal. Although usually of no great size it can be found having diameters up to about 15 inches and very exceptionally more than this. The wood is hard and close-grained and the heartwood is of an attractive reddish-brown colour. When of sufficient diameter and length it could be used for small articles of furniture and would be useful for turnery work. The pods are eaten by cattle but it has been found that they cause milk and butter to become tainted. The pods are sometimes used as a fish poison and they have been used in connection with bilharzia control.

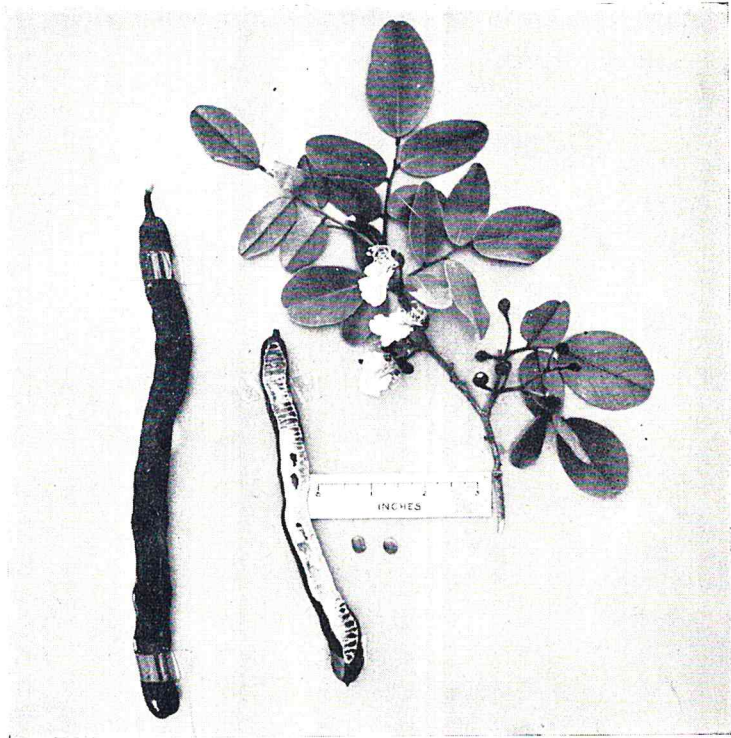


Swartzia madagascariensis

Habit photo

Showing pods on a nearly leafless tree.

[Photo by A. A. Pardy.]



Swartzia madagascariensis
Leaves, flowers, pods and seeds.

[Photo by A. A. Pardy.]