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Notes on Indigenous Trees and Shrubs of S. Rhodesia

Croton sylvaticus Hochst.
Euphorbiaceae

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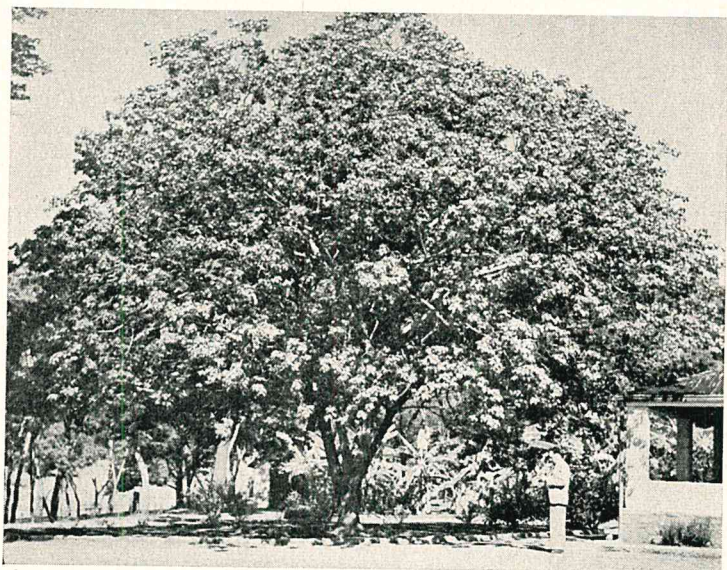
Croton sylvaticus Hochst.
Euphorbiaceae

Common Name.—Mt. Silinda Linden. **Native Names.**—Musugutu, Musukuta (Chis.).

General Description.—As the common name indicates this tree occurs in the Mt. Silinda forest where it is up to 100 ft. high and 3 feet in diameter at breast height. It is one of the few deciduous trees of that forest. The bark is somewhat rough and of a greyish colour. The dark green, thin leaves are simple and alternate. Small, narrow stipules are present but these fall off early. Petioles or leaf-stalks are slender and commonly about 1 inch to 2 inches in length but may be longer. There are two small, but obvious, glands at the junction of the leaf-stalk with the leaf-blade. Veins are prominent on the underside of the blade, there being three to five prominent lateral veins arising from the base of the leaf-blade, which is up to nearly 5 in. in length. The margin of the blade is finely notched. The shape of the blade is ovate or ovate-lanceolate with a pointed tip and rounded base. On the under surface is a sparse covering of star-like hairs as also occurs on leaf-stalks and twigs. Leaf-scars are prominent on twigs. The unisexual flowers of a greenish colour, which are to be seen during the earlier part of the rainy season, are in racemes about 6 inches long at the ends of twigs with both male and female flowers, the latter, fewer in number, are mainly in the lower portion of the inflorescence. The sub-globose fruit of an attractive orange colour is a capsule having a diameter of about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.

Distribution.—This tree occurs in the higher rainfall areas of the Eastern Border of S. Rhodesia, notably in the evergreen high forest at Mt. Silinda. It also occurs in adjoining territories including the Union and as far north as Uganda.

Uses.—The light wood is fairly soft and nearly white with black specks which detract from its appearance. No special uses are known other than that it has been reported that the bark is used by Natives as a fish-poison and the plant is stated to be toxic and used by Natives for medical purposes. It makes an attractive ornamental tree and is of fairly fast growth. The fruits, however, may be somewhat poisonous.



Croton sylvaticus.
Planted as an ornamental tree at the Aloe Garden near
Salisbury.

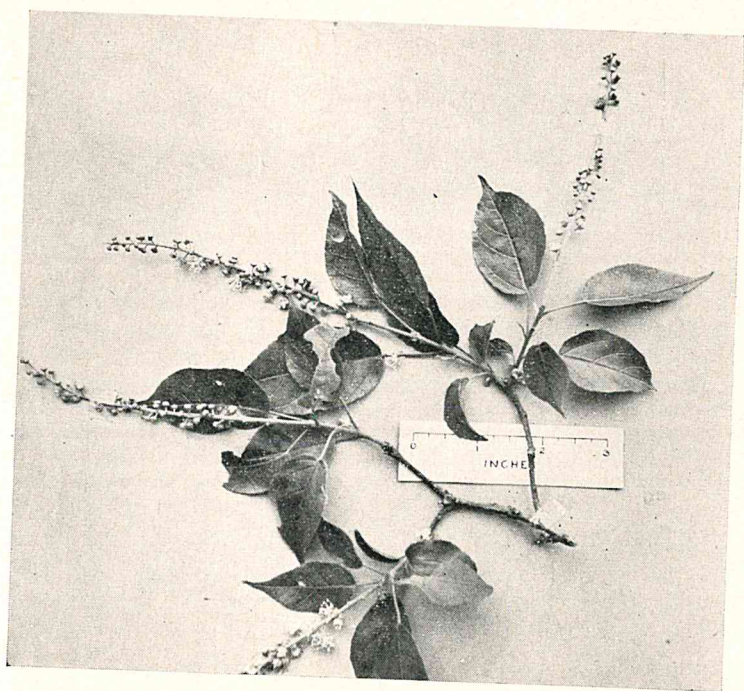
[Photo. by A. A. Pardy.]



Croton sylvaticus.

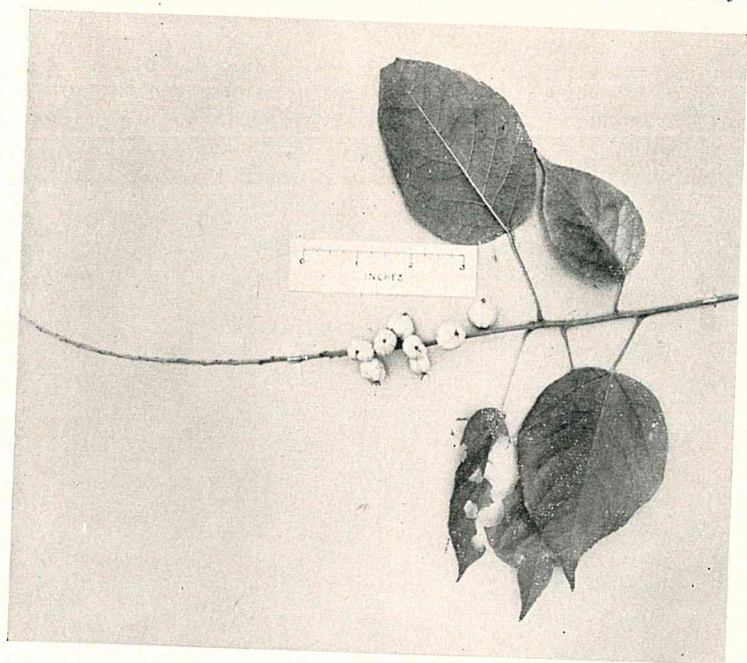
Showing a *C. sylvaticus* in the centre foreground growing in
Mt. Silinda forest.

[Photo, by R. B. Hack.



Croton sylvaticus.
Leaves and flowers.

[Photo. by A. A. Pardy.]



Croton sylvaticus.
Leaves and fruits.

[Photo. by A. A. Pardy.]