

# ACACIA POLYACANTHA

## *Acacia polyacantha* Willd. subsp. *campylacantha* (A. Rich.) Brenan

By Mike Bingham, line drawings by Trish Bingham

### Names

General	mukoka, munga, muunga
Tonga group	
Tonga	muhwela, mufwefwe
Ila	muhwe, hitantasokwe
Soli	chombwe
Sala	mukwele
Toka	munfene
Eastern Province	
Bisa	ngobe, ngowe
Nsenga	chombwe
Northwestern Province	
Kaonde	kyambwe, kasale
Lundamuzeze,	muzenze, muña
Luvale	muzeze
Lozi	mukakani



Figure 1. Open stands of trees on the Kafue Flats.

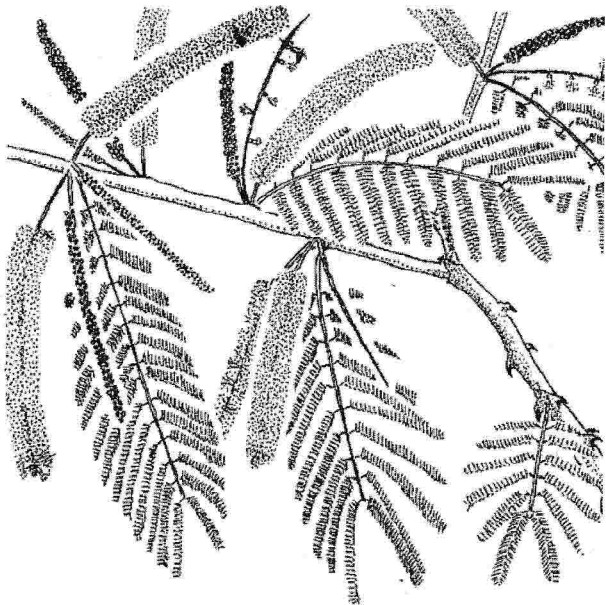


Figure 2. White or cream flower spikes with the new leaves in November.

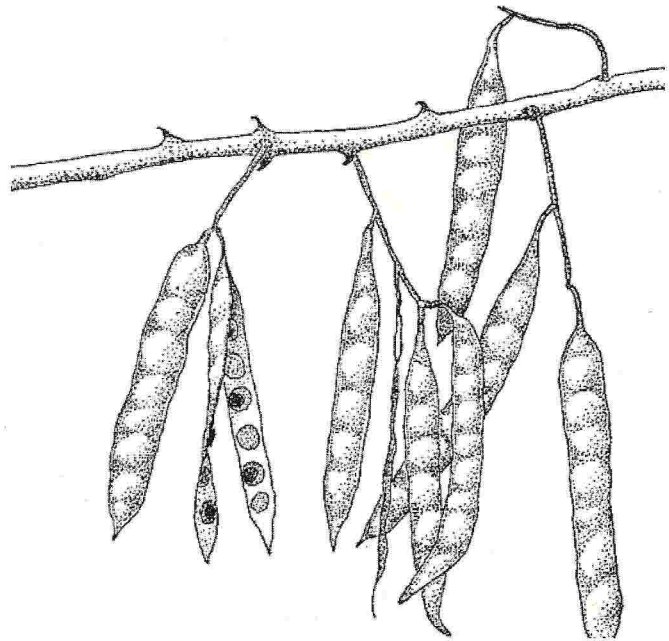


Figure 3. Pods on the leafless twigs in May-June.

The type specimen of *Acacia polyacantha* is from India. The subspecies *campylacantha* is widespread in tropical Africa, with the type specimen coming from Ethiopia. The species belongs to the subgenus *Senegalia*, which has a pair of recurved prickles below each leaf.

Of all the *Acacia* species native to Zambia, *A. polyacantha* is the most common and widespread, but especially in the south of the country, above 15 deg. latitude. While most members of the genus are weedy to some degree, *A. polyacantha* is undoubtedly the weediest, able to colonize most vegetation types after disturbance, but requiring more fertile soils. Pure stands all of the same age (cohorts) are frequently found on recent deposits of alluvium. Impenetrable thickets of young trees can spring up in the space of a few years in heavily grazed areas. The Kafue Flats and the surrounding areas are its headquarters in Zambia, but some of the tallest specimens, up to 25m, are on alluvium over dolomite in Mpongwe District of south-western Copperbelt Province. They invade the margins of riverine forests after destruction by fire.

Extensive stands of the species may be classified as Munga Woodland, but it may be preferable to call it wooded grassland, as the grass is probably the more stable and permanent component.

Young trees especially can be mistaken for *A. galpinii*. Both trees can grow to a height of 25m, but *A. polyacantha* has a more erect habit, while *A. galpinii* has a wide spreading crown. Some of the more obvious differences are presented in Table 1.

