

Kigelia pinnata

[Synonyms : *Crescentia africana*, *Crescentia pinnata*, *Kigelia abyssinica*, *Kigelia aethiopica*, *Kigelia africana*, *Kigelia elliotii*, *Tecoma africana*]

SAUSAGE TREE is an evergreen tree. Native to tropical Africa it has slightly fetid smelling, reddish-lined and paler outside, purplish-red flowers.

It is also known as *Abu sidra* (Arabic), African sausage tree, *Arbol de la Salchicha* (Spanish), *Arbre á saucisses* (French), *Árvore das Salsichas* (Portuguese), Cucumber tree, Fetish tree, German sausage tree, *Jhar phanoos* (Indian), *Kiratina* (Kikuyu), *Komkommerboom* (Afrikaans), *Leberwurstbaum* (German), *Muratina* (Kikuyu), *Mwegea* (Swahili), *Nufuten* (Twi), *Pølsetrøe* (Danish), *Quigélia* (Portuguese), and *umVongothi* (Zulu).

The flowers bloom at night and fall the following morning. They are pollinated by bats and night-flying insects. The inedible fruit that are suspended on slender rope-like stems can weigh roughly 10-14 lb.

Warning – unripe fruit are believed to be poisonous.

Pinnata is a botanical reference to the leaf-shape meaning ‘a feathery arrangement of leaflets on each side of the common stalk’.

The tree is known to the Ashanti people of Ghana as *nufatene* (‘hanging breasts’). Many of the older women in some of the African tribes are highly respected. They are likely to have breastfed at least ten children and their breasts will have become unusually long and will sometimes be displayed with pride. Their resemblance to the fruit not only explains the tree’s name but also why for some tribes the tree is a symbol of fertility and can be a common sight growing near some of their villages.

In parts of Kenya the seeds are prized as a male aphrodisiac.

In some areas it is said that the sausage-like, hard-shelled fruit have been used to obtain a black dye.

The inedible fruit pulp has intoxicating qualities and in East Africa particularly baked slices of it are added to aid the fermentation of the local sugar cane (*Saccharum*) and honey beer.

In some areas slices of the grey-green fruit are added to cattle drinking troughs as a leech deterrent and fruit ash has been used to cleanse animal wounds.

Branches of the sausage tree are made into stools and bows, as well as the traditional beehives that are such a familiar a sight in Kenya. The hard and heavy wood is also used for canoes and pounders.

Medicinally, local use has been made of both bark, and fruit. The former has been employed in the treatment of dysentery, the latter has provided a remedy for piles and for constipation. Both have been used to restore taste, and heal ulcers or sores. The fruit and roots have been used for some female ailments.