

## **Kigelia pinnata syn K. africana – African Sausage Tree**

*Kigelia pinnata syn africana*, commonly known as the Sausage Tree, is a medium to large, semi-deciduous to deciduous tree from southern Africa growing to 25m with a rounded crown. The leaves, 3-whorled, are grouped at the tips of branches. The individual leaves are opposite compound with 1 terminal leaflet which are hard and the margins wavy - the bottom leaflets are the smallest with the top ones the biggest. The bark is normally smooth but it does flake on older trees.

The stunning, dark-red, trumpet shaped flowers occurs in long drooping sprays, up to 12 flowers per spray. Sausage trees are normally pollinated by fruit bats although some nectar seeking birds also assist. Blooms are nectar producing and on occasions can hold up to a teaspoonful of nectar. The Sausage Tree flowers in early Spring, and the flowers can be seen on the tree for months.

The fruits are huge, gray-brown and sausage shaped, hence the common name of the tree and can be up to 1m long and 18cm in diameter and they weigh up to 12kg! The colour of the wood is light brown and it is moderately heavy and is used for dugout canoes in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

The flowers and fruit of the Sausage Tree are always an eye-catcher and conversation piece. The fruit is toxic but is used in traditional medicine to treat skin disorders, ulcers and sores. The bark and roots are also used in traditional medicine. Some modern skin ointments are prepared from fruit extracts. Research has shown that the fruit has got antibacterial properties.

### **Propagation**

*Kigelia* is easily propagated from seed.

Germinate the seeds in a well draining mix such as washed river sand or a vermiculite/perlite mix.

Cover the seed with a thin layer of the germination mix. If kept moist, the seeds should germinate within 2 to 4 weeks.

Prick out into individual tubes as soon as they are large enough to handle. They transplant easily and will grow quickly once planted in a container. Be prepared to pot them on when they outgrow a container. The growth rate under normal conditions (warm summers and frost free winters) is about 1m per year.

This tree is frost sensitive (it prefers temperatures above 12°C) but it will survive in colder areas if it is protected for the first 3 to 5 years.