

Scientific name: *Rauvolfia vomitoria* Afzel.

Family: Apocynaceae.

Distribution/conservation status: widely distributed, especially in forest margins, secondary forest and cleared areas. Roots and stem bark are over-harvested for medicinal use in some areas. Not assessed by the IUCN Red List.

Common names: African serpent wood, African snakeroot (English), Akanta (Igbo), Ira-igbo (Yoruba), Wadda (Hausa), Akata, Aeugor (Edo)

Fruit/seeds: clusters of orange-red globose drupes containing hard, ellipsoid seeds.

Fruiting time: December – January, June – August.

Seed collection: collect ripe fruits from tree, squeeze to extract seeds and rinse in water to remove flesh.

Type of seed: recalcitrant.

Sowing method: sow seeds promptly in a seed tray and cover with a thin layer of the sowing medium.

Sowing medium: equal parts forest soil and cured sawdust.

Germination period: 54 days.

Germination percentage: 20%.

Vegetative propagation: take stem cuttings 15cm long, remove leaves and insert 2-3cm deep in cured sawdust or topsoil in a non-mist propagator or large pot covered with a clear polythene bag. Cuttings develop new leaves in c. 2 weeks and root in c. 4 weeks. Transplant separately into pots and allow a further 4 weeks before planting out.

Growth/development: seedlings are slow, taking about 22 weeks before they are large enough to plant out. Seedlings and cuttings require partial shade and regular watering. Acclimatise to higher light levels before planting out and choose a bright position.