

Scientific Name: *Lophira alata* Banks ex C. F. Gaertn.

Family: Ochnaceae.

Distribution/conservation status: occurs in dense humid evergreen forest, most commonly in coastal areas. Vulnerable (VU) and decreasing due to overexploitation for timber.

Common Names: Ironwood (English), Akufo, Okopia (Igbo), Ekki (Yoruba), Owegbe (Edo).

Fruits/seeds: one seeded woody conical nut, tapering at the apex, with 2 unequal, oblong, pink to reddish, finely veined wings at the base. Seed is narrowly egg-shaped.

Fruiting time: January – March.

Seed collection: fruits are dispersed by wind and can be collected from the ground beneath and around the parent tree. Collect promptly and regularly as fruits are heavily predated by rodents and duiker. Check for insect damage and discard any with small holes.

Type of seed: recalcitrant.

Sowing method: detach wing from the base of the fruit and gently prise open to remove the seed. Soak seeds in cold water overnight before sowing at a depth of 1 – 2cm. Handle seeds carefully as the slightest damage may affect germination.

Sowing medium: forest soil.

Germination period: 9 – 45 days.

Germination percentage: 80 – 95%.

Growth and development: quite fast, reaching 1.5m in the first year. Saplings require a sunny position for optimal growth. Plant out when up to 1m tall; larger saplings do not transplant well.

Notes: sow seeds promptly after collection as viability is quickly lost in storage. Protect sowings from rodents to prevent predation on seeds and seedlings.