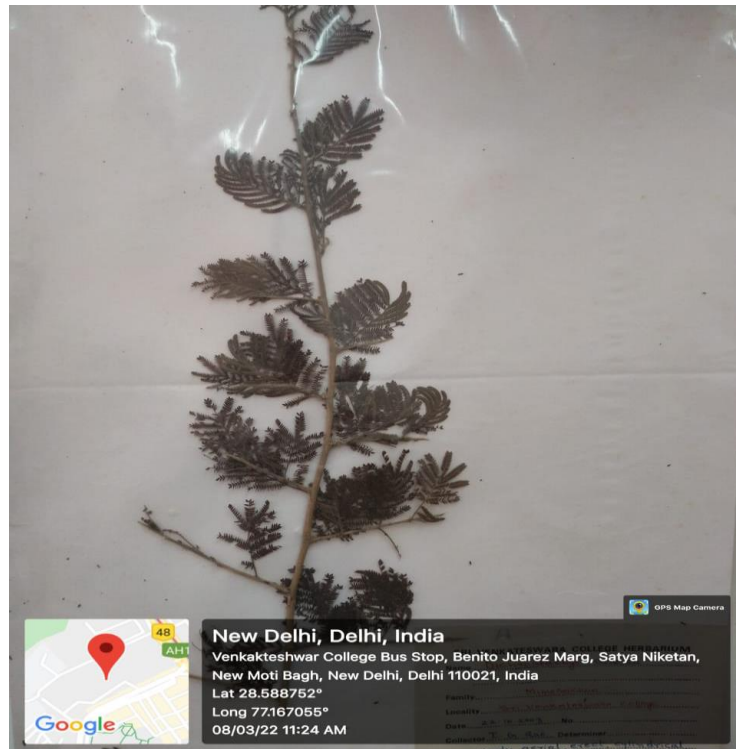


Dichrostachys cinerea



Common Name: Sicklebush, Bell mimosa, Chinese lantern tree, Kalahari Christmas tree

Scientific Name: *Dichrostachys cinerea*

Family: Fabaceae

They typically grow up to 7 metres in height and have strong alternate thorns, generally up to 8 cm long. The bipinnately compound leaves are up to 15 centimetres long. Flowers of the *Dichrostachys cinerea* are characteristically in bicoloured cylindrical spikes that resemble Chinese lanterns and are 6 to 8 centimetres long and fragrant. The upper flowers of a hanging spike are sterile and are of lilac or pale purple. Pods are usually a mustard brown and are generally twisted or spiralled and may be up to 100 by 15 millimetres. The species can be subcategorized with two slight variations that have been recognised: *D. cinerea* ssp. *africana* and *D. cinerea* ssp. *nyassana*, the latter is typically larger and less hairy in its foliage.

Economically Important Part: Fruit, Seeds

Economic Importance: *Dichrostachys cinerea* makes impressive bonsai specimens. The hard and durable wood is also termite resistant, making it ideal for fence posts. It is also used to make tool handles, milk pots, smoking jars, and fibre from the bark. It is often planted to serve as live fencing and as fodder. The roots are used as a local anaesthetic for ailments such as snake bites, scorpion stings and toothache. In Botswana, parts of the tree are used as a tapeworm cure. It also makes high-quality firewood.