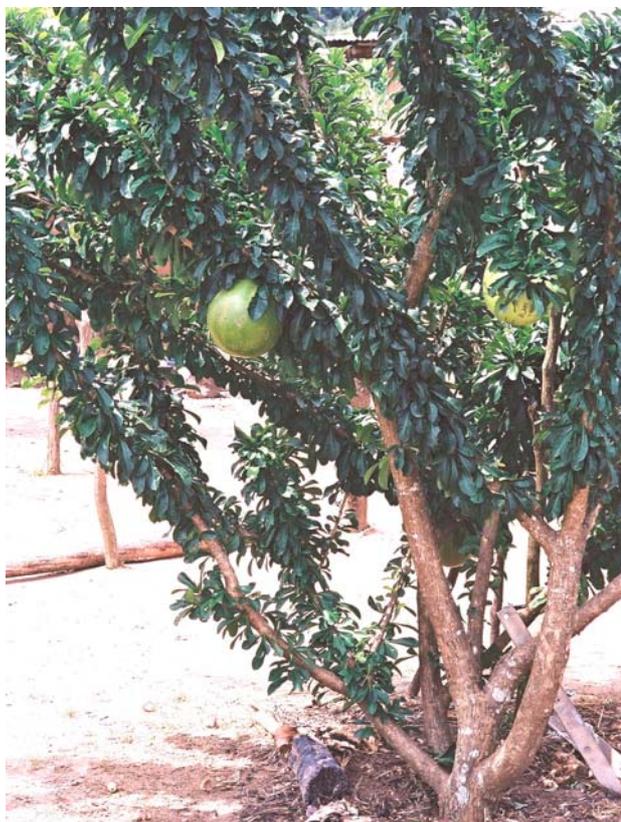


Crescentia cujete

(Bignoniaceae)

Synonyms *C. acuminata*, *C. arborea*

Common names Arbre à Calebasses (Fr.), calabash tree.



Description A handsome tree growing up to 8 m high. It has rough bark. Leaves are up to 18 cm long and 5 cm wide. The flowers appear directly from nodes on the trunk and branches, and bloom at night. The fruits develop after pollination by bats. They are round and up to 25 cm in diameter with a hard green woody shell. The flat seeds are small and embedded in the pulp.

Ecology Originally from Mexico, Colombia and the Caribbean region but now widely dispersed in the tropics, though uncommon in Bas-Congo.

Left : *Tree growing near Mayenga*

Propagation Can be grown from seed or cuttings.

Uses The fruit shell is widely used elsewhere as a container or cup and may also be carved and made into ornaments. Seed and fruit are edible. The pulp can be made into a juice and

a cough medicine. The young fruits can also be pickled. In Central America bees often collect nectar from the fallen flowers. Blocks of wood made from *Crescentia cujete* are used for growing orchids in the West Indies. The plant has various medicinal uses in West Africa.

Fallen flowers



References Irvine 1961, Uphof 1968, Espina & Ordex 1983, Burkill 1985, Macmillan 1991