**Column variables’ description**

**‘block’** –name of the corresponding 50-m × 50-m subplot in the 82.5-ha “P-plot” at Korup National Park, in Cameroon; note, the “**27-Z**” denotes a 2nd canopy gap used with the 27-E demarcated subplot.

**‘plot’** – unique numeric identifier of a gap area (each had been paired to an understory area 30-m away from the gap edge).

**‘seedling’** – number assigned to identify a seedling within a given gap per block; the asterisk indicates a seedling that served as a “replacement” for original seedlings clipped by rodents.

**‘species’** – the three codominant trees species used in the herbivore exclusion experiment. “**Mb”**, *Microberlinia bisulcata*; “**Tb”**, *Tetraberlinia bifoliolata*; “**Tk”**, *Tetraberlinia korupensis*.

**‘genus’** – the canopy tree species grouped accord to genus. “**Tbk”**, *T. bifoliolata* and *T. korupensis* individuals pooled as a sample for the main analysis.

**‘canopy’** – the type of canopy cover above the experimental seedlings. “**Gap**” denotes a canopy-disturbed area of forest formed by a tree-fall or large branch-fall.

**‘treat’** – the herbivory treatment randomized to each seedling. “**C”**, denotes the “control”, which permitted insects (and vertebrates) to access to plants; “**N”**, denotes the caged seedlings protected by mesh netting from insects (vertebrates unavoidably as well) in the canopy gaps across the forest.

**‘rlxd.ht3’** – the final relaxed plant height (greatest distance, in cm, perpendicular to the ground) of each surviving seedling/sapling, measured in the fourth census of the field experiment (early October 2009).

**‘prop.chp.tot.p3’** – the proportion of extant leaves present on each surviving seedling/sapling that had signs of leaf chewing from insects, measured in the fourth census of the field experiment (early October 2009).

**‘vinecol’** – whether an experimental seedling/sapling was colonized by at least one vine (score = 1) or not at all (score = 0) during the field experiment, observed at the time of the third and fourth census combined (i.e., March 2009 and October 2009, respectively).

**‘%ppfd.nov08’** – percentage of above-canopy light radiation (photosynthetic photon flux density) measured above each seedling/sapling in the experiment, obtained mid way through the experiment (November 2008) on days with overcast sky conditions.