

Antidesma venosum

Euphorbiaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Boni:** Ngogaje, Mulilago; **Chonyi:** Musumbiji; **Digo:** Mzengatsongo, Kihuro, Chikuro; **Embu:** Muthithio; **Giriama:** Mhirondo, Msimbiji; **Kamba:** Mukala (Kitui), Kitelanthia, Kitolanthia (Makueni), Ngala, Ndelanthia (fruit); **Kambe:** Musimbiji; **Kikuyu:** Mukondwe, Muhoigwa; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumukhaku, Bukhaku (fruit); **Luo:** Oguambula, Oguombula; **Malakote:** Musigisigi; **Mbeere:** Mukanga arithi, Muthithio, Muthethuka; **Meru:** Mutonye; **Pokomo:** Musasusi; **Sanya:** Harki thokochi; **Swahili:** Mbua nono, Mbua ya nuno msasuzi, Karacha, Mziwaziwa, Mwinamia ziwa, Msuaga.

DESCRIPTION: A shrub or, less often, a small tree to 6 m tall, with **spreading branches**. **BARK:** Rough. **LEAVES:** Large, elliptic, **densely hairy and light green to reddish brown beneath**. **FLOWERS:** Male and female separate, yellow-green in axillary and terminal spikes. **Flowering head often galled, drooping**. **FRUIT:** Numerous in bunches, **light green, turning red to reddish purple** to almost black on ripening.

ECOLOGY: Widespread in Africa from Gambia east to Ethiopia and south to Namibia, South Africa and Madagascar. In Kenya, in Boni Forest, Thui Hill (Makueni), Kitui Hills, Nzaui Hills (Makueni), Mavuria (Embu) and in Central, Coast and Nyanza Provinces, in bushed grassland, coastal bushland, forest edges, riverine bushland, 0–1,900 m. In Coast Province it is found in farmland, at forest edges and also along the seashore on coral outcrops. Rainfall: 850–1,000 mm. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV. Two fruiting seasons at the coast: July and November–December. Fruits mainly in March in Makueni, but also less abundantly at other times.

USES: Firewood, tool handles, knife sheaths, edible fruit, medicine (leaves, seeds, twigs and roots), bee forage, shade, ornamental, dye (fruit used by children as an ink substitute).

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, cuttings. Easy to propagate by seed.

MANAGEMENT: Produces suckers.

REMARKS: The Sanya believe that the fruit must be eaten with only one hand, otherwise it will lose its sweetness. Roots are said to be poisonous. Reported to be an invasive weed in fallows in Tanzania.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Ruffo et al., 2002.

