

***Solanecio mannii* (*Crassocephalum mannii*)**

Asteraceae (Compositae)

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Kamba:** Mooa, Ilangala; **Kikuyu:** Muthakwa wathi, Musariki, Mwathathi; **Kipsigis:** Chekurbet; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Nandebe; **Luhya (Tiriki):** Kaibaraki; **Luo:** Marowo, Maroo; **Maasai:** Olmusakwa entim, Olairamirami; **Marakwet:** Tergekwa; **Meru:** Mutomboro; **Samburu:** Lugugutt; **Taita:** Mkorombosha.

DESCRIPTION: A much-branched sub-succulent woody shrub or tree to 10 m. **The branching is in 3s.** **BARK:** Usually **grey-green**, but grey-brown on old specimens. Branches marked clearly with old leaf scars. **LEAVES:** Crowded at the end of branches, long oval and narrow, pale green, **rather fleshy**, about 15 cm (up to 40 cm), the tip pointed, the edge deeply and irregularly toothed, tapering to the base, which clasps the stem. **FLOWERS:** Small yellow-orange flowers in **large branched terminal** or axillary **heads** 15–80 cm long with 6 florets together (**florets only tubular**—no ray florets). Flowers open at dusk and have a very unpleasant smell. **FRUIT:** Typical of the family, **small nutlets/seeds** that have **hairy tufts** like parachutes. Seed is blown and dispersed by wind.

ECOLOGY: A shrub or tree common in eastern Africa and also into South Africa. It grows in secondary scrub, forest gaps and plantations, preferring higher wet areas of Kenya, 0–2,600 m. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV.

USES: Firewood, medicine (roots and leaves), fodder, ornamental, live fence, boundary marking.

PROPAGATION: Direct sowing at site, cuttings.

SEED: Collect fruits before they are ripe. Put them in a polythene bag to ripen so the seeds are released there and can be easily collected.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Sow seeds fresh.

MANAGEMENT: Fast growing. Trimming if grown as fence.

REMARKS: The wood is extremely soft and burns quickly.

FURTHER READING: Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Blundell, 1987; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Katende et al., 1995; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002.

