

Anacardium occidentale**Anacardiaceae****Brazil, Caribbean**

STANDARD/TRADE NAME: Cashewnut.

COMMON NAMES: **Digo:** Mbibo, Mbibu; **English:** Cashewnut; **Giriama:** Mkanju; **Kamba:** Mukoloso, Ngoloso (fruit); **Sanya:** Maibo; **Swahili:** Mkanju, Mkorosho, Mbibo.

DESCRIPTION: A medium-sized, spreading tree to 15 m but usually smaller. **BARK:** Rough dark brown. **LEAVES:** Leathery dark green, **oval, 15 cm long, 8 cm wide, rounded tip**, wavy. **FLOWERS:** In terminal clusters, **small and star-like, cream-pink coloured**. **FRUIT:** Hard, **kidney-shaped nuts** attached to the base of a shiny **orange-yellow 'cashew-apple'**, or 'bibo' (swollen flower stalk). Nuts fall to the ground when mature.

ECOLOGY: A tree now naturalized at the Kenya coast. One of the oldest cash crops, widely planted all over the tropics. Prefers deep sandy soils but not saline or poorly drained ones. Found where there is groundwater in the drier areas. It has been grown on poor eroded soils with unreliable rainfall and can be intercropped. Agroclimatic Zones I-IV. Flowering in May-August, occasionally October-November.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber, furniture, posts, edible nut and cashew-apple, livestock feed (cake after oil extraction from fruit), medicine, shade, ornamental, dune fixation, soil conservation, windbreak, gum (for book binding), resin and nut-shell oil (varnish, inks, tiles).

PROPAGATION: Direct sowing at site, grafting, air layering, ground layering.

SEED: 150-300 seeds per kg. Germinate in 10-12 days.
treatment: Immerse seed in cold water, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours. Not necessary for fresh seed.
storage: Seed can be stored but viability is gradually reduced, 50% after 10 months and total loss after 13-14 months. Dry nuts in the sun for several weeks before storing or sowing.

MANAGEMENT: Slow growing; lopping, coppicing.

REMARKS: The outer covering of the nuts contains an irritating poisonous oil, so the cover must be removed before the nuts can be eaten. Grown in plantations at the coast for its nuts. Occasionally found in upland areas but mainly as an ornamental. Cashew apples are favourite food for baboons and vervet and Syke's monkeys. Bees

enjoy nectar from the flowers but the honey from this plant is bitter. This is the only species among the 11 in the genus that has been cultivated extensively for commercial purpose.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Beentje, 1994; Dharani, 2002; Jensen, 1999; Katende et al., 1995; Lötschert and Beese, 1983; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Verheij and Coronel, 1993; von Maydell, 1990.

