

***Berchemia discolor*****Rhamnaceae****Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Boran:** Jajab; **English:** Bird cherry; **Giriama:** Mkulu; Mkulu gongo; **Kamba:** Kisaaya (Makueni), Kisanawa (Kitui), Nzaaya (fruit), Nzanawa (fruit); **Malakote:** Jajabho, Mujajabho (fruit); **Mbeere:** Muthwana; **Orma:** Jajab; **Pokot:** Muchukwo, Muchuk (plural); **Rendille:** Santau; **Samburu:** Santaiti; **Sanya:** Kolathi; **Somali:** Deen, Dheenden ro'o, Kor' guba; **Swahili:** Mkulu, Mnago; **Taita:** Mzwana; **Tharaka:** Muthwana; **Tugen:** Muchukwa; **Turkana:** Emeyan.

**DESCRIPTION:** A semi-deciduous shrub or tall tree to 18 m, with erect spreading branches making a heavy rounded crown. **BARK:** Grey-black, cracking and scaly, corky spots on young greenish branches. **LEAVES:** Shiny dark green, sticky when young, oval to 11 cm, lateral nerves making a clear pattern. Yellowish green below. **FLOWERS:** Small yellow-green, stalked, in loose clusters attracting bees. **FRUIT:** Oval, tapering towards the tip, 1–2 cm long, green, turning yellow to reddish brown when ripe; 1–2 flat seeds in sweet, edible flesh.

**ECOLOGY:** Widespread from Sudan to South Africa in semi-arid bushland, wooded grassland as well as riverine vegetation, 0–1,600 m. Tends to be riparian in the more arid areas. Found mainly in Rift Valley, Eastern and Coast Provinces of Kenya. Common on riverine, alluvial soils, in rocky areas and in light soils. Agroclimatic Zones V–VII. Fruits in February–March (Meru, Tharaka, Mwingi, Kitui).

**USES:** Firewood, charcoal, timber (construction), furniture, poles, tool handles, utensils (pestles), edible fruit, drink (juice made from fruit), seasoning (ash from burnt wood used for seasoning vegetables), medicine, fodder (leaves), bee forage, ornamental, shade, windbreak, resin, black dye (powdered heartwood and roots).

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings, direct sowing at site, produces root suckers from injured or exposed roots.

**SEED:** 2,300–3,500 seeds per kg. Germination usually good, 80–100%. Germinate readily.

**treatment:** Not necessary, but soaking in cold water for 12 hours may enhance germination.

**storage:** Seed can be stored for long periods.

**MANAGEMENT:** Coppicing. Fairly fast growing when young.

**REMARKS:** Ripe (and occasionally unripe) fruit eaten and occasionally sold in local towns. The sapwood is light

and yellow, the heartwood yellow-brown and resinous. One of the hardest woods in eastern and Central Africa, used as poles, in construction, for containers, furniture and frames for doors and windows. Stems are good fuelwood and charcoal is excellent. Dried fruit used by Tharaka girls as beads. Tree used for hanging beehives (Kitui, Tharaka, Mbeere). Leaves provide fodder for camels and goats.

**FURTHER READING:** <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Albrecht, 1993; Beentje, 1994; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Ruffo et al., 2002; Storrs, 1979.

