Blighia unijugata

Indigenous

STANDARD/TRADE NAME: Mwikuni.

Common names: Digo: Mpwakapwaka, Nchivuri; Kikuyu: Muikoni; Luhya: Shiarambatsa; Luo: Bilo, Ochol, Ochond achak; Meru: Muthiama; Pokomo: Mubonyeni, Mubo; Swahili: Mwakamwatu.

DESCRIPTION: An understorey or canopy tree, 7–12 m, but to 25 m in forest. It has a dense, shady, rounded crown (like mango). BARK: Thin, grey to dark green, rather smooth but with horizontal ridges and little rounded bumps. LEAVES: Compound, only 1-3 pairs leaflets on a short stalk, dramatic pink-red at first, later shiny dark green, dull below. Each leaflet about 12 cm and quite wide, smaller leaflets at the base, the edge wavy and tip long and pointed. FLOWERS: Small, fragrant and white on a drooping head 7-8 cm. Male trees and female trees. FRUIT: Bright yellow-orange-red capsules decorate the tree, each soft, hairy, rather triangular to 4 cm long with 3 winged lobes. The fruits become woody and split into 3 sections, each twisting back to set free 1-cm shiny brown-black seeds. Each has a small yellow cuplike aril.

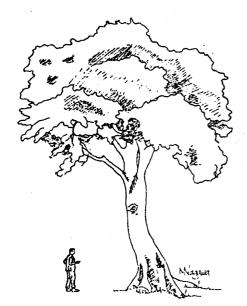
EcoLogy: A tree extending from Uganda and Kenya to South Africa. It is found in warm moist evergreen forests; becomes riverine in dry areas. Often a colonizer in secondary vegetation, 0–1,900 m. Agroclimatic Zones I—III.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, timber, furniture, poles, flooring, boat building (canoes), medicine (roots), shade (for coffee), soap.

Propagation: Seedlings (sow seeds in pots) and wildings.
SEED: Seeds are contained in a 3-sided capsule and germinate easily. Thin stem cuttings may also root in sand.
treatment: Not necessary.

Management: Coppicing, pollarding.

REMARKS: Leaves and fruit have been reported to be poisonous—not even eaten by baboons. The red heartwood has been used for building and furniture. Common as a shade tree and suitable for commercial plantations.



Sapindaceae

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Noad and Birnie, 1989.





