

***Blighia unijugata***

## Sapindaceae

**Indigenous****STANDARD/TRADE NAME:** Mwikuni.**COMMON NAMES:** **Digo:** Mpwapwaka, Nchivuri; **Kikuyu:** Muikoni; **Luhya:** Shiarambatsa; **Luo:** Bilo, Ochol, Ochond achak; **Meru:** Muthiama; **Pokomo:** Mubonyeni, Mubo; **Swahili:** Mwakamwatu.

**DESCRIPTION:** An understory 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 cup-like 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 heart-wood has been used for building and furniture. Common as a shade tree and suitable for commercial plantations.

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



Seed with aril

