

Calodendrum capense

Rutaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **English:** Cape chestnut; **Kamba:** Yangu; **Kikuyu:** Muraracii, Muroroa; **Kipsigis:** Kipkaria, Sasuriet; **Maasai:** Ol-larashi, Enkarashi; **Meru:** Mujai, Mujura, Mutimuera; **Nandi:** Kipkarkuriat; **Pokot:** Ocharasliit; **Samburu:** Larachi; **Taita:** Mogorusi; **Taveta:** Murei.

DESCRIPTION: A semi-deciduous tree to 15 m with a spreading crown, almost bare for several months. **BARK:** Grey, smooth, **young branchlets soft hairy.** **LEAVES:** Opposite, simple, to 14 cm, often bunched together, edges wavy, midrib and veins very clear underneath, main veins parallel. **FLOWERS:** Large and showy, **pink-white in erect heads**, abundant but erratic, at the ends of branches, crimson gland dots, purple-brown anthers on long stamens. **FRUIT:** **Knobbly to softly spiny**, becoming hard. Capsules ('chestnuts') hang on the tree then split into a star-like shape to set free large **black angular nut-like but bitter seeds.**

ECOLOGY: A tree widespread in Africa, from Uganda to southern Africa, where it can be found in coastal forests. In Kenya, typical of evergreen highland forests and riverine forest, 1,200–2,200 m. Found in a wide range of soil types, including black cotton. Agroclimatic Zone III. Flowering may be continuous but with peaks in December–January in Nairobi.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber, furniture (stools), poles, tool handles, cattle troughs, bee forage, shade, ornamental, mulch, windbreak.

PROPAGATION: Seedling, wildings.

SEED: Seeds are large and easy to collect. Germination is good with fresh seed. About 600–1,000 seeds per kg. Germination in 10–40 days with a germination rate up to 90%, but often lower.

treatment: Not necessary. Float on water to separate viable seeds that will sink.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods but are susceptible to insect attack.

MANAGEMENT: Slow growing in most conditions. Trees grown from seedlings will need about 10 years to flower. Hardy once established. Prune young trees to shape. Coppices when young. May also be grafted.

REMARKS: A graceful tree, especially when in full bloom.

Planted in avenues, parks and in homesteads. Wood tough, bends well and used in house construction.

Monkeys and squirrels eat young capsules with seed while on the tree.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Beentje, 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; van Wyk, 1998; Blundell, 1987; Mbuya et al., 1994; Katende et al., 1995; Dharani, 2002.



Seeds



Fruit capsule

