

***Carissa spinarum* (C. edulis)**

Apocynaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Boni:** Mulimuli; **Boran:** Dagams; **Chonyi:** Mtandambo; **Digo:** Mtambuu; **Duruma:** Mulowe; **Embu:** Mukawa, Nkawa (fruit); **Gabra:** Dagams, Dagamsa; **Giriama:** Mtandambo; **Kamba:** Kikawa, Mukawa (Machakos, Makueni), Mutote (Kitui), Ngaawa (fruit), Ndote (fruit), Nzunu (fruit, Kitui), Matote (fruit); **Kambe:** Mtandambo; **Kikuyu:** Mukawa; **Kipsigis:** Legetetyet, Legetiet; **Kisii:** Omonyangateti; **Kuria:** Omunyoike; **Luhya:** Shikata; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kukurwa (plant), Burwa (fruit), Sirwa; **Luhya (Tachoni):** Oburwa; **Luo:** Ochuoga; **Maasai:** Olamuriaki, Ilamuriak (plural); **Malakote:** Mokalakala, Kaka mchangani; **Marakwet:** Leketet (plural), Leketetwa, Leketetwo; **Mbeere:** Mukawa; **Meru:** Kamuria, Nkawa mwimbi (fruit); **Nandi:** Legetetwa, Legetetuet; **Pokomo:** Mlalanche; **Legetet:** Lokotetwo; **Rendille:** Godhoom boor; **Samburu:** Lamuriei, Lamuriai, Lmuria; **Sanya:** Gurura; **Somali:** Adishabel; **Swahili:** Mtandambo; **Taita:** Kirimba, Nandangoma; **Teso:** Emuriei; **Tugen:** Legetetik (fruit), Legatetwo (plant); **Turkana:** Ekamuria.

DESCRIPTION: A spiny evergreen shrub or liana usually to 5 m, occasionally more. **BARK:** Grey, smooth with **straight woody spines to 5 cm**, often in pairs, rarely branching. Milky latex as in all the family. **LEAVES:** **Opposite, leathery, dark green, shiny to 5 cm, tip pointed**, base rounded, stalk very short. **FLOWERS:** Fragrant, in **pink-white terminal clusters**, each flower to 2 cm, lobes overlap to the right. **FRUIT:** **Rounded berries about 1 cm**, purple-black when ripe, sweet and edible, 2–4 seeds.

ECOLOGY: Widespread in Africa from Senegal to Somalia and south to Botswana and Mozambique. Also in Asia from Yemen to India. Common in most areas of Kenya in forest edges, bushland and thickets, especially on rocky hillsides. Common in rocky areas, on clay soils, especially black-cotton soils at valley bottoms and near seasonally flooded areas, 0–2,500 m. Rare in the coastal belt. Rainfall: 500–1,800 mm. Agroclimatic Zones II–V. Flowers in all seasons with peaks in the rainy seasons or soon after. Around Nairobi in full flower in May. Fruits in April–July and November–December in Bungoma.

USES: Edible fruit (ripe and unripe), edible flowers, flavouring (soup, stews), medicine (roots, branches), fodder (good for goats), bee forage, ornamental, dye (ripe fruit), live fence, veterinary medicine.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings (sow in pots), wildings, direct sowing at site. Seeds germinate easily. Wildings often grow under parent bushes.

SEED: Fresh seed germinate well; 28,000–30,000 seeds per kg.

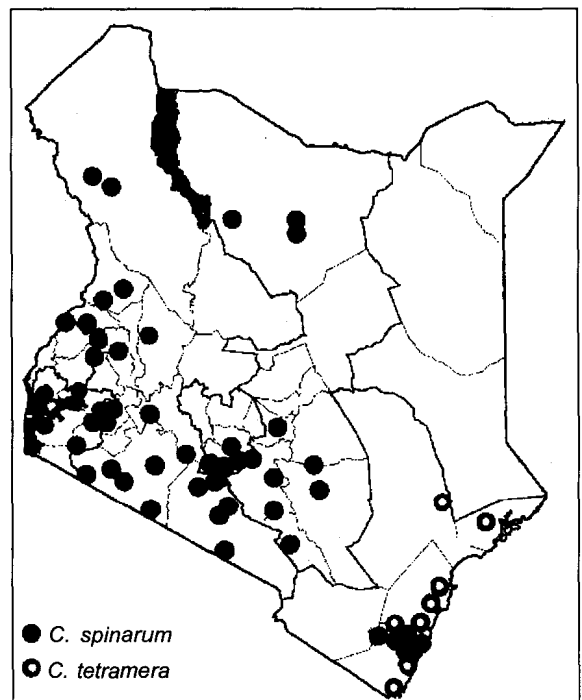
treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Seed loses viability fairly quickly. Use fresh seed for best results.

MANAGEMENT: Fairly slow growing. Trim the fence.

REMARKS: An important fruit and medicinal plant in Kenya. It can be grown from seed to develop into an attractive and impenetrable hedge. Both the unripe and ripe fruits are eaten whole. Much liked by both children and adults. Flowers eaten (Luhya/Bukusu). The plant is among the most important sources of traditional medicine. Silk-moth cocoons occasionally found on the plant. Fruits

occasionally sold in markets. Two other closely related species have edible fruit and may also be used for live fences. *C. bispinosa* shares many features with *C. spinarum* from which it can be distinguished by the petal arrangements. The corolla lobes overlap to the left in *C. bispinosa* but to the right in *C. spinarum*. *C. bispinosa* is only occasional in coastal Kenya, and it is only the subsp. *bispinosa* that is found in the country. *C. tetramera* is also restricted to the coast, has smaller fruits,



***Carissa spinarum* (cont)**

forked spines, faintly toothed leaf margin and tends to creep more. All 3 species share the same local names.

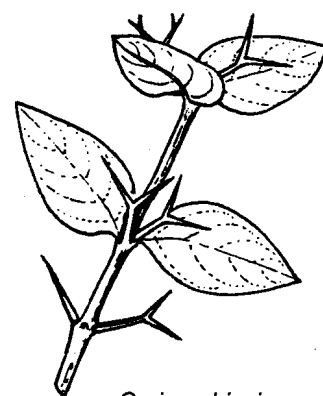
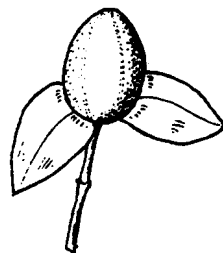
FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Blundell,

1987; Dharani, 2002; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; ITDG and IIRR, 1996; Katende et al., 1995, 1999; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Ruffo et al., 2002.



Carissa tetramera

Fruit of *Carissa* sp.



Carissa bispinosa