

Cassipourea malosana

Rhizophoraceae

Indigenous

STANDARD/TRADE NAME: Pillar wood.

COMMON NAMES: **Embu:** Muthaguta; **Kikuyu:** Muthaithi; **Kipsigis:** Muangaita; **Kisii:** Omonyakerede; **Maasai:** Olarioi, Olanget; **Marakwet:** Tendewa; **Meru:** Muthaguta; **Nandi:** Martit; **Ogiek:** Mangweta; **Samburu:** Muchanja, Lobbobo; **Tugen:** Maiti; **Turkana:** Ekatha.

DESCRIPTION: A tall evergreen tree to 25 m with a very straight cylindrical pillar-like trunk. **BARK:** Usually smooth, greyish, with horizontal lines of breathing pores. **LEAVES:** Opposite, broadly oval, to 8 cm long, mostly more than 4 cm, **edge often slightly toothed**, net veins prominent. **FLOWERS:** Small, from leaf axils, yellowish green with many stamens. Calyx persistent. **FRUIT:** Small, fleshy, egg-shaped capsules to 8 mm long that open, becoming black when dry. Hairy at first, becoming hairless later. Seeds with aril.

ECOLOGY: Common in drier forests (podo/cedar/olive) or as understorey in moister forest and also in forest remnants, 750–2,550 m. Found particularly on Mt Kenya and the Aberdares as well as in drier upland forest around Nairobi and in Loita Forest. Common along streams. Agroclimatic Zones II–III.

USES: Timber (construction), firewood, beehives, beverage ('tea' from boiled roots), medicine (boiled roots), bee forage.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, wildings.

REMARKS: The wood is very hard, used commercially, but frequently attacked by borers. Holes in the trunk are frequently homes for bees. A smaller species is *C. euryoides* (**Bajun:** Mbazanzi; **Boni:** Mkulangi; **Giriama:** Masuzi; **Swahili:** Mwanzangu, Mugome) hardly exceeding 10 m, usually with entire leaf margins. It is used for poles. Wood is hard and resistant to borers. Other species include *C. celastroides* (**Kamba:** Muthongoli, Mwiymbi), a usually shrubby plant of evergreen bushland, especially on hillsides. *C. gummiflua* is a tall tree with smooth pale grey bark. It is found in moist evergreen forests, especially *Ocotea*-dominated forests of south Mt Kenya and also the Aberdares. The wood is hard and used as timber. *C. ruwensorensis* (**Luhya:** Mukoloho; **Nandi:** Martet) is a small tree more common in Nandi and Kakamega Forests. Leaves toothed towards the tip and a densely hairy egg-shaped fruit. It has fine-textured wood. The taxonomy of this genus in Kenya needs some further work.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Sommerlatte Sommerlatte, 1990.

