

Celtis africana

Ulmaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **English:** Akasinga, Camdeboo stinkwood; **Kikuyu:** Murundu; **Kipsigis:** Chepkeleliet, Nyasiat; **Luhya:** Mwenya, Mweyu; **Maasai:** Olmositet; **Meru:** Murundu; **Nandi:** Chepkeleriet; **Ogiek:** Mase; **Sabaot:** Mastet, Mastitet, Mosididiet; **Tugen:** Musisetiet, Tandimu, Tandimwo.

DESCRIPTION: A deciduous forest tree about 12 m, but reaching 35 m, with a spreading crown. **BARK:** Smooth, pale grey often marked with horizontal rings. Young shoots have rust-coloured hairs. **LEAVES:** Clearly 3-veined from the base of the oval leaves (as in all *Celtis* species), outer 2 veins reaching well into the half of the leaf towards the tip (distal end), rough and dull green above, hairs on veins below, edge toothed over distal 2/3 base a little unequal, tip drawn out and pointed. **FLOWERS:** Sepals but no petals, very small, greenish, on thin stalks, in clusters beside leaves; female flowers above male flowers on the stalk. **FRUIT:** Yellow or orange, round and hairy, less than 1 cm, on stalks about 2 cm long, hard seeds inside.

ECOLOGY: A tree with a very wide range of habitats from dry rocky outcrops to moist evergreen as well as riverine forest. Mainly occurs in high-rainfall areas between 1,150 and 2,400 m; locally common in Rift Valley and central Kenya. Riverine in dry areas. Agroclimatic Zones I–VI. Flowers in April–May and fruits in July–August in Rift Valley and Western Province; flowers in October–December in Central Kenya.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber (local construction), tool handles, farm implements, fodder (leaves), shade.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings and wildings.

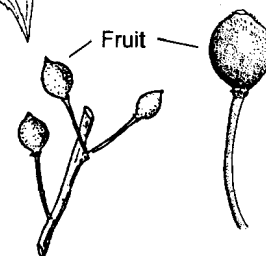
SEED: Fruits must be collected from the tree before they release the seed. The right time is when the fruits turn from yellow to brownish. They are then dried in the sun and the seed extracted through shaking when the drupes open. Germination within 60 days. 17,000 seeds per kg. **treatment:** Not necessary, but soaking in cold water for 24 hours may hasten germination.



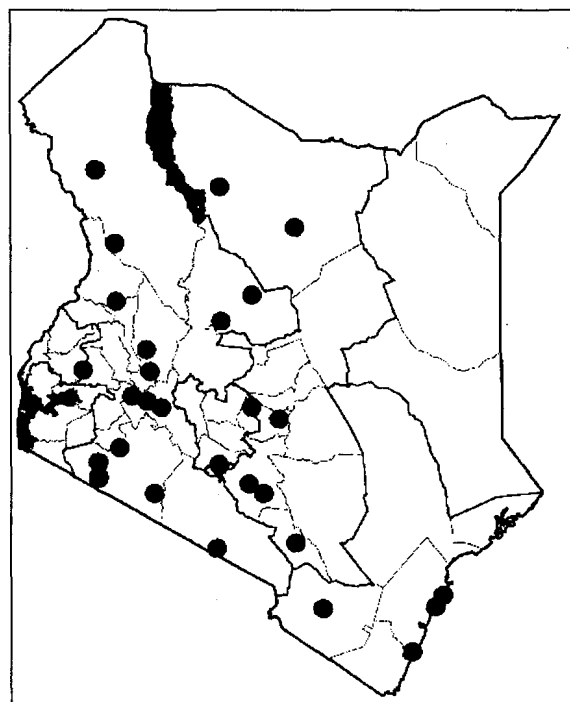
Male flower



Female flower



Fruit



Celtis africana (cont)

storage: Seed can be stored for some time if kept in airtight containers.

MANAGEMENT: Side pruning.

REMARKS: The timber rots and splits easily, but it is very strong and with proper seasoning useful for tool handles and building. Leaves are browsed by animals, including cattle, and the leaves and fruits are important in the diet of colobus monkeys. Does not compete with crops since it has a light shade. It is a tree very suitable for parks and avenues. A few other *Celtis* species occur in Kenya. *C.*

mildbraedii (**Luhya:** Shunza; **Meru:** Muruanje) is found in areas with moist evergreen forest. Others are *C. philippensis* (**Digo:** Mutambuu), which is coastal, and *C. gomphophylla* (**Kikuyu:** Musaa; **Luhya:** Musa; **Luo:** Nyawend agwata; **Meru:** Mutoo), which is more widespread, occurring in moist forests.

FURTHER READING: Albrecht, 1993; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Dharani, 2002; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990.