

Combretum collinum

Combretaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Embu:** Murithi, Mururuka; **Kamba:** Itithi, Mutithi; **Luhya:** Sheraha; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumulaha, Kumukalukha; **Luo:** Adugo, Kech rachar, Odugno, Odugu, Ohoro; **Nandi:** Asenuet; **Sabaot:** Asenuet; **Turkana:** Ekimeng'.

DESCRIPTION: A shrub or small- to medium-sized tree to 10 m, the crown flat or rounded, often dominant in an area. **BARK:** Smooth, grey and with powdery surface when young, later grey-brown, rough, scaly or fissured. **LEAVES:** Vary greatly, often in whorls of 3–4, usually **tough and leathery, darker and shiny above**, oval or long oval, usually 10–17 cm but may be up to 22 cm long, the tip blunt, the base rounded or narrowed to a leaf stalk 1–4 cm. The underside may be hairy or not but with **few or many silvery scales**, between clearly paired veins (6–20 pairs). **FLOWERS:** **Cream-white-yellow, sweet scented and very small, in spikes 6–10 cm long**, usually shorter than leaves, the tree conspicuous in flower. **FRUIT:** **4-winged, generally elliptic, 2.5–5 cm long x 2–4 cm wide**, rust red when young, turning golden-brown–grey–purple. The many scales, often red, catch the light so the **surface shines like metal**.

ECOLOGY: A tree widespread in tropical and subtropical Africa from West Africa into Sudan and Ethiopia, throughout eastern Africa and south to southern Africa. It is a most variable tree and many subspecies have been separated on details of leaf arrangement, fruit size, hairiness and scales. Agroclimatic Zones II–V. Flowers in March–April and seeds in September–November in Bungoma.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, posts, medicine (leaves, roots to treat diarrhoea and vomiting), bee forage, dead fences (branches), firebreak, shade.

PROPAGATION: Wildings and seedlings (sow seed in pots).

SEED: Collect winged fruit.

treatment: Open fruit to get seed; if difficult, soak in cold water and then open.

storage: The whole fruit can be stored for some weeks, but it is best is to open the fruit and sow immediately after extracting the seeds as they will not store thereafter. Sow fresh seeds.

MANAGEMENT: Slow growing; coppicing, lopping, pollarding.

REMARKS: Makes very good charcoal. Flowers produce good nectar for honey. The hard, durable wood burns well, but the living tree survives grass fires. The tree is occasionally attacked by caterpillars with irritating hairs.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990; Storrs, 1979.

