

***Craibia brownii***

Fabaceae (Papilionaceae)

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Kamba:** Muthi, Mutisi; **Kikuyu:** Mukubu; **Luhya:** Muhandi; **Nandi:** Neunet; **Tharaka:** Mugunkuma; **Tugen:** Cheptewo.

**DESCRIPTION:** A much-branched evergreen tree to 20 m or more, with a round dense crown. **BARK:** Grey, smooth but flaking in old trees. **LEAVES:** Compound with 3–8 alternate, elliptic leaflets, 5–10-cm long, very smooth and shiny above. **FLOWERS:** White tinged with pale pink, in terminal clusters. **FRUIT:** Dark brown thick flat pods, about 6 cm long, splitting on the tree to release brownish to black seeds.

**ECOLOGY:** Found in north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, and in Kenya where it is common in the western highlands. Occurs in forest and forest margins at altitudes between 1,150 and 2,100 m. Also in riverine forests, dry *Croton-Brachylaena* forest or moist forest. Agroclimatic Zones II–III.

**USES:** Timber, arrows, trays, baskets (made from flexible branches), edible seed, medicine (roots).

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings.

**MANAGEMENT:** Extremely slow growing.

**REMARKS:** Seed edible after a long period of cooking. Wood close grained, white, hard. Ash from this species mixed with ash from other species is used to attract bees to an unoccupied hive (Tharaka).

A related species, *C. brevicaudata* (**Giriama/Digo:** Mfunda; **Swahili:** Mfunda mweupe), is found at lower altitudes (only below 1,150 m), especially in the coastal belt where *C. brownii* does not occur. Leaves have 3–5 leaflets. It is common in rocky places. It is a source of timber.

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



Enlarged flower

