

***Crotalaria agatiflora***

Fabaceae (Papilionaceae)

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Digo:** Mfunda; **English:** Lion's claw; **Giriama:** Mfunda; **Kamba:** Iviinzi, Musili; **Kikuyu:** Mwethia; **Kipsigis:** Kipkururiet; **Luo:** Arech; **Maasai:** Olotwalan; **Swahili:** Mfunda mweupe.

**DESCRIPTION:** A much-branched shrub, usually 1.5–4 m high. Stems may be hairy, depending on the variety.

**LEAVES:** Divided into 3 leaflets to 9 cm x 3 cm, normally much smaller. Hairy beneath or hairless. Very variable. **FLOWERS:** Large, pale yellow, many in each head. **FRUIT:** Smooth pods, up to 10 cm x 2 cm.

**ECOLOGY:** Mainly in the highland part of Kenya in bushed grassland, at roadsides, wasteland and in cultivated land. Also in forest margins and clearings at high altitudes, 1,400–3,300 m. Agroclimatic Zones I–III.

**USES:** Fibre, mulch, nitrogen-fixing.

**PROPAGATION:** Grows easily from seeds.

**REMARKS:** Several subspecies are recognized. A number of other *Crotalaria* species may grow to the size of small shrubs.

The more important ones include the following. *C. axillaris* (**Digo:** Mkelekele; **Embu:** Machunguchungu; **Kikuyu:** Muchangire; **Meru:** Mchunguchungu; **Swahili:** Mchekecheke; **Taita:** Luafumbo), with leaves that are somewhat hairy on the undersides, is widely distributed in Kenya, 0–2,300 m. *C. goodiiiformis* (**Kamba:** Muthilia, Mukai; **Kikuyu:** Muchingiri) has yellow-to-orange flowers with a purple patch and thinly hairy fruit; 0–2,250 m. *C. ochroleuca* (**Luhya:** Mitoo; **Luo:** Mito) is a species that is cultivated as a green-manure and leafy vegetable crop in western Kenya.

**FURTHER READING:** Beentje, 1994; Dharani, 2002.

