

Croton macrostachyus

Euphorbiaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Kamba:** Kitundu, Mutundu; **Kikuyu:** Mutundu, Mutundu wa njora; **Kipsigis:** Tebesuet; **Kisii:** Omosocho; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumuchwichwi, Kumukunusia, Kumutoboso, Kumutotoa; **Luhya:** Musutsu, Omuswitswi; **Luo:** Ngong'ngong' (Migori); **Maasai:** Olkeparke; **Marakwet:** Taboswa; **Meru:** Mutuntu; **Nandi:** Tebesuet; **Pokot:** Toboswa; **Taita:** Mfirifiri; **Taveta:** Mfirifiri; **Tugen:** Tebesuet.

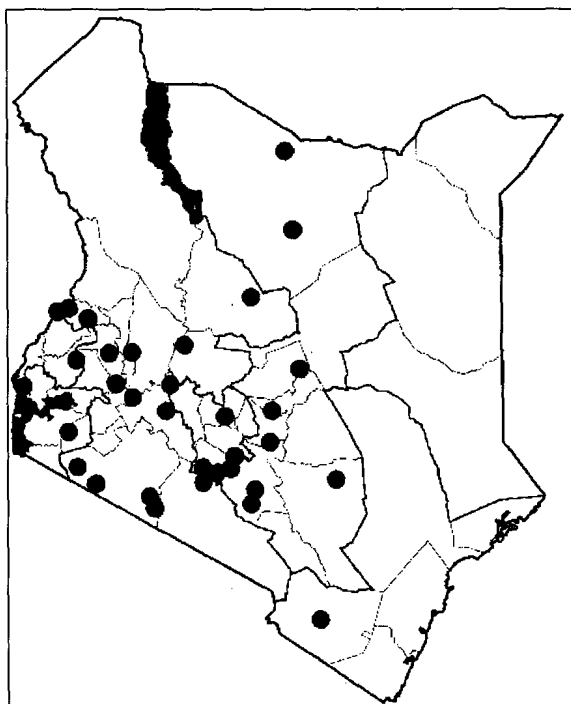
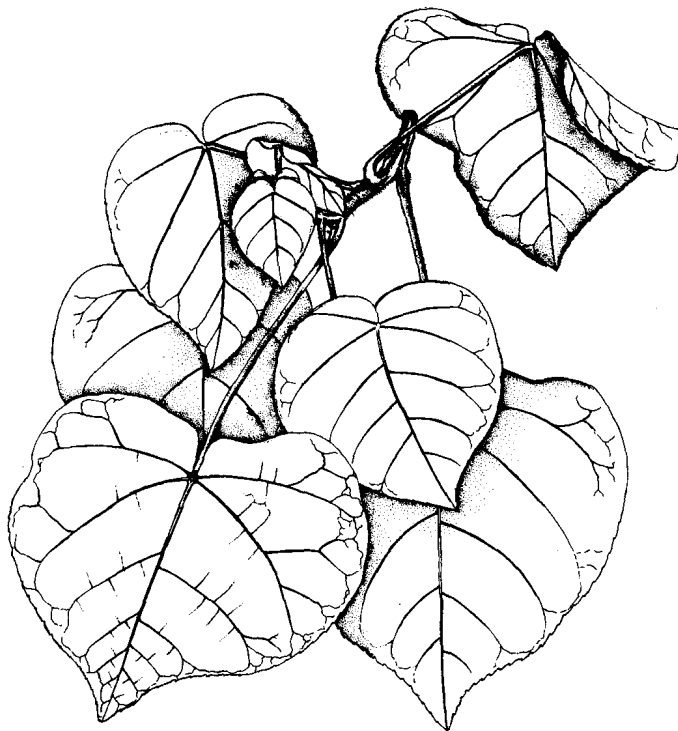
DESCRIPTION: A deciduous tree, the crown rounded and open with large spreading branches, reaching 2–5 m. **BARK:** Pale grey, fairly smooth. **LEAVES:** Large, soft and heart-shaped, to 15 cm long, on long stems, crowded at the end of branchlets, veins prominent with 2 stalked glands just visible at the leaf base, paler below due to soft hairs. **FLOWERS:** Creamy yellow, sweetly scented in erect spikes to 25 cm, all over the tree. Flowers appear only briefly, the flower spike turning down as fruits mature. **FRUIT:** Pea-sized capsules on drooping spikes, to 30 cm, mature capsules split open with a sharp noise to release shiny grey seeds with a rather soft cream aril.

ECOLOGY: Found more or less throughout tropical Africa from Guinea eastwards to Ethiopia and south to Angola, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. Common in secondary forests and at forest edges, along rivers and around lakes. In Kenya, it is widespread in the farming landscape in wetter areas, 600–2,000 m. Agroclimatic Zones I–III. Flowering period extended in most areas but peak in March–June (western) and May–July in central Kenya. Fruit development takes 4–5 months.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber, poles, tool handles, medicine (sap, leaves, roots and bark), fodder, bee forage, mulch, soil conservation, ceremonial, veterinary medicine.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, wildings.

SEED: 16,000–27,000 seeds per kg. Seeds often damaged by insects while on the tree. Before collecting, check that insides of seeds are cream to white coloured. Collect the fruit and sun-dry to release seeds.



Croton macrostachyus (cont)

treatment: Not necessary. Germination rate 40–60% in 30–60 days from healthy seeds.

storage: Seed are oily and can be stored only for some weeks.

MANAGEMENT: Fairly fast growing on good sites, slow on drier sites; lopping, pollarding, coppicing.

REMARKS: Seed and resin are poisonous. The Maasai use stems for making sword sheaths. When cut for fuelwood it has a rather unpleasant spicy odour and is thus not always popular for that purpose. A good tree for intercropping.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Albrecht, 1993; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Dharani, 2002; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; ITDG and IIRR, 1996; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990.

