

Croton megalocarpus

Euphorbiaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Boran:** Nyapo; **Duruma:** Nyaepo; **Embu:** Mukinduri; **Gabra:** Nyaap'po; **Giriama:** Muyama; **Kamba:** Muthulu, Nthulu (fruit); **Kikuyu:** Mukinduri; **Luhya:** Musine; **Maasai:** Olmerguet; **Meru:** Mukinduri; **Nandi:** Masineitet; **Samburu:** Marakuat; **Taita:** Mkigara; **Tugen:** Ortuat.

DESCRIPTION: A spreading deciduous tree to 35 m with **distinctive layering of branches**, the crown rather flat and giving light shade. **BARK:** Dark grey, rough, cracking. **LEAVES:** Variable, long oval and pointed to 12 cm, but often much smaller, stalked. **The dull green upper surface contrasts with the pale, silvery underside.** **FLOWERS:** Monoecious or dioecious, very short lived but conspicuous, the buds opening after heavy rains into pale yellow hanging spikes to 25 cm, with only a few female flowers at the base. **FRUIT:** Very many **grey woody capsules**, about 2.5 cm long with **3 flattened seeds** inside, grey-brown when mature with a small bump (the caruncle).

ECOLOGY: Found in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique. In Kenya, it is widespread, from the south to the western and northern parts of the country. Particularly common in dry forests at the coast, around Nairobi and on mountains in northern Kenya where it may be the dominant upperstorey tree. Also cultivated a great deal in most areas. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV. Very common in Zone III. Flowers end of April–early May. Produces seed in October–December in central and northern Kenya, January–February in western Kenya.

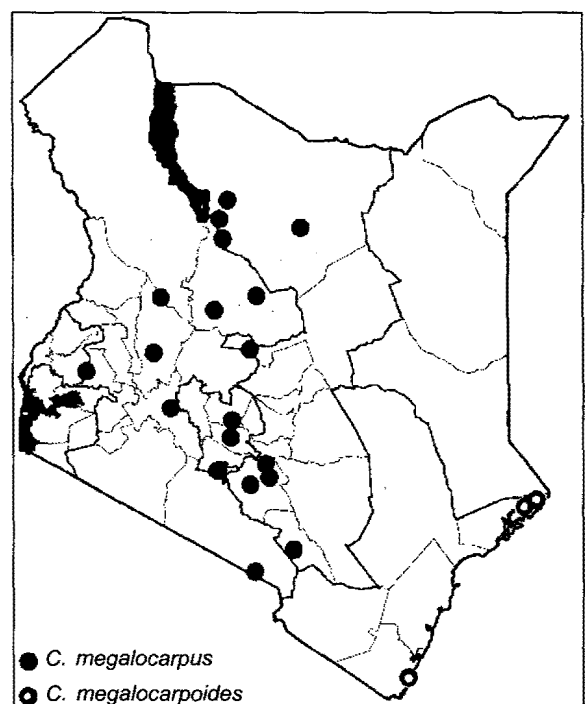
USES: Firewood (smoke may irritate eyes), timber, charcoal, poles, medicine (bark), bee forage, shade, ornamental, mulch, live fence, boundary marking (especially popular among the Kikuyu), veterinary medicine.

PROPAGATION: Direct sowing at site (recommended), seedlings (sow seed in directly in pots), wildings.

SEED: The tree seeds prolifically. Crack the fruit shell and sow. About 1,000–1,700 seeds per kg. Germination rate up to 90% within 30 days. Germination may start within 1 or 2 weeks.

treatment: Not necessary.

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



Croton megalocarpus (cont)

MANAGEMENT: Fast growing in high-potential areas, slow elsewhere; lopping, pollarding and coppicing.

REMARKS: Seed has high oil (30%) and protein content (50%). The oil extract can be a strong purgative. The tree is not recommended for intercropping due to competition and shade. Cultural beliefs prevent this tree being planted close to houses. Smoke from the firewood may

irritate eyes and the heartwood has a very bad smell. The sap also has a spicy odour.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Albrecht, 1993; Beentje, 1994; Blundell, 1987; Dharani, 2002; ITDG and IIRR, 1996; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989.



Seeds

Enlarged male flower