

Cussonia holstii

Araliaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Boran:** Abratu; **Kamba:** Malendi; **Kikuyu:** Morogorogo; **Kipsigis:** Lulukwet; **Maasai:** Oloiurrur, Oltumaroi; **Meru:** Morogorogo, Mwenjera; **Samburu:** Olbolorio; **Somali:** Wadad; **Taita:** Mwaya; **Tugen:** Soya.

DESCRIPTION: A medium-sized tree to 15 m with a large rounded and usually open crown. **BARK:** Dark brown, rough, thick and corky. **LEAVES:** Arm-like with 5 leaflets or 5-lobed in young plants, crowded at the ends of branches in large, rounded clusters. Leaflets usually 5, on stalks up to 6 cm long, radiating from the ends of the main leaf stalks that are about 30 cm long. Leaflets ovate, up to 10 cm long, edge toothed, base unequal-sided, tip sharply pointed. **FLOWERS:** Greenish yellow, on spikes up to 25 cm long, spikes 5–15 together, erect from the tips of branchlets. **FRUIT:** Small, whitish or yellow, crowded along the spikes.

ECOLOGY: Found from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia. Widely distributed in highland forests or forest margins, 1,500–2,500 m. Also found in evergreen bushland on rocky soils and at forest edges of dry forests. Common in areas such as Nanyuki, Moyale and Kibwezi. A few remnant trees grown in the Limuru and Kikuyu outskirts of Nairobi. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV.

USES: Timber (doors), beehives, tool handles, utensils (mortars, sheath for knives, troughs), medicine (bark), fodder (leaves for goats), bee forage, shade.

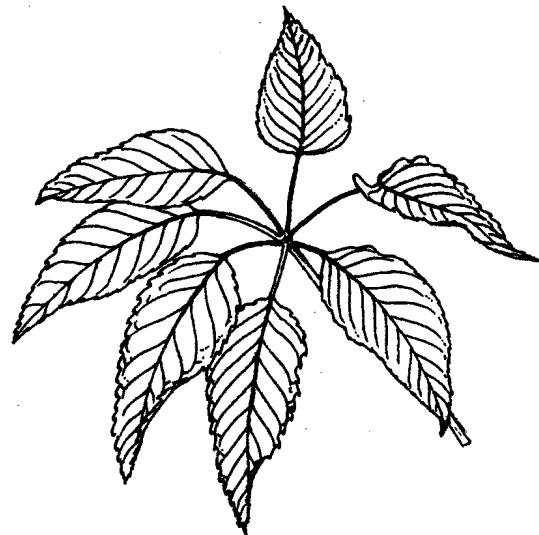
PROPAGATION: Some *Cussonia* species have been reported to grow from cuttings, other from seed. Little is known about this particular species.

SEED:

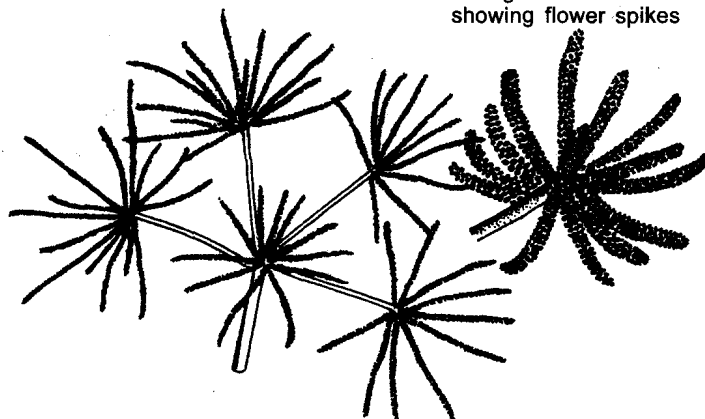
storage: Try fresh seed or cuttings, avoid storage.

REMARKS: Hollow trunks used to make beehives. Though soft the wood is used for doors by the Kipsigis. A bark decoction is used by the Maasai and Meru to expel the placenta in childbirth.

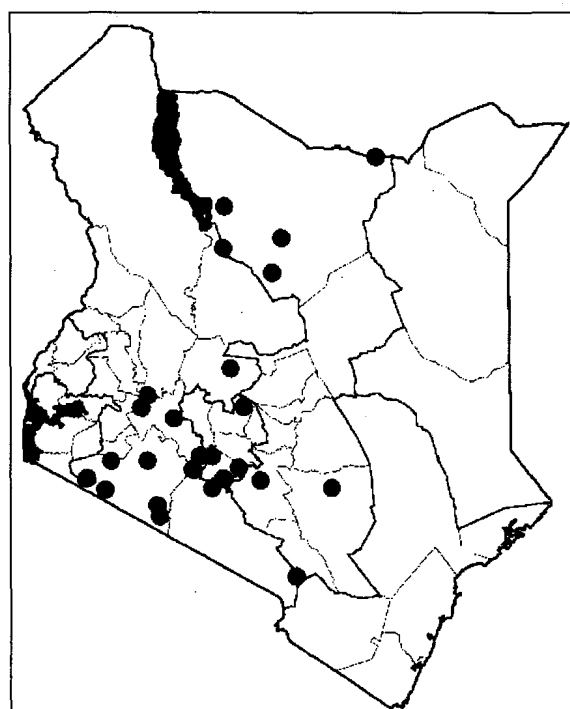
C. zimmermannii (Boni: Atame; Digo: Mnyala; Giriama: Mnyala; Sanya: Hakthame; Swahili: Mbomba maji, Mpapayi mwitu) is a related species found at forest margins or in evergreen bushland at the coast where *C. holstii* does not occur. It is used for making coffins,



Enlarged flower head showing flower spikes



Flowering branch with flower heads



Cussonia holstii (cont)

drums and boats; leaves and roots as medicine; wood used as firewood (poor quality) and for carving; leaves for veterinary medicine. *C. arborea* (**Kamba:** Malendi; **Luhya:** Kitandawabasia; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumwifubulu;) and *C. spicata* (**Kikuyu:** Mwenyiere; **Kipsigis:** Sokwet, **Maasai:** Olurur, **Marakwet:** Jeleikta, **Meru:** Muengera, **Pokot:** Cheluptet, Alakanta, **Samburu:** Borillo, **Taita:** Kidadongo, Kidongadi, **Tugen:** Soya) are other important species with fairly wide distribution in Kenya. All the species have white soft wood.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Dharani, 2002 (*C. spicata*); Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Kokwaro, 1993; Noad and Birnie, 1989.

