

Elaeodendron buchananii

Celastraceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Kamba:** Mulundu; **Kikuyu:** Mutanga; **Kipsigis:** Sawanet, Saonet; **Kisii:** Enkanda; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumunyo-fwe, Kumukulanyuni; **Maasai:** Osoket, Osoget; **Meru:** Munati; **Orma:** Kalkach; **Pokomo:** Madanchui; **Sabaot:** Sunwa.

DESCRIPTION: A tree to 20 m high with a **strong, stout irregular trunk**, dense, evergreen foliage and a rounded or irregular crown. **BARK:** Dark grey, smooth while young but fissured with age. **LEAVES:** **Dark green**, leathery, up to 14 cm long, without hairs, widest in the middle or towards the tip. **Margin with incurved teeth.** **FLOWERS:** Either male or female, very small, cream to yellowish, fragrant, arranged along a branching stalk arising from the leaf axils. **FRUIT:** Yellow, woody and sharply pointed, about 1–2 cm.

ECOLOGY: A tree of tropical Africa found in riverine woodland, wooded grassland, dry evergreen forest, forest remnants as well as in cultivated land. Common in rocky riverine vegetation around Nairobi. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber, medicine (roots and bark), shade, mulch, soil conservation, ash from burned leaves used to prepare local salt, veterinary medicine.

PROPAGATION: By seed.

MANAGEMENT: Pollarding, lopping, pruning to reduce shade. Fairly slow growing.

REMARKS: The wood is hard and fairly durable. Many trees of this species are mutilated because of frequent cutting and collection of the bark. The leaves and fruit are poisonous to livestock and humans; therefore livestock should not be kept near this plant in the dry season due to the attraction of its evergreen foliage. Young plants are almost always covered with cobwebs with caterpillars. The tree grows well with crops but may need pruning to reduce shade. Three other species of *Elaeodendron* occur in Kenya, all distributed in the coastal and adjoining zones. One of them, *E. schweinfurthianum* (**Bajun:** Mkwamba kerengende; **Swahili:** Mperemende), is a

shrub or tree to 10 m and is fairly common at the coast in bushland on sandy soil and on coral near the sea. The leaf margin of this species may or may not be toothed, and the leaf tip usually ends in a spine. Flowers are yellow-green, male and female together; the fruit is white, usually less than 1 cm and is reputedly edible.

FURTHER READING: Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; ITDG and IIRR, 1996; Kokwaro, 1993; Noad and Birnie, 1989.

