

***Euclea divinorum*****Ebenaceae****Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **English:** Diamond-leaved euclea; **Kamba:** Mukinyai, Mukuthi (Mwala-Machakos), Nginyai (fruit); **Kikuyu:** Mukinyai, Mukinyei; **Kipsigis:** Usuet; **Luhya:** Muswa; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumuchanjaasi; **Luo:** Achondradoho, Akado, Ochol, Ochond radoho; **Maasai:** Olkinyei, Ilkinyei (plural), Osojo (Narok), Isojon (plural); **Mbeere:** Mukiinyi, Mukinyi; **Meru:** Mukiinyei, Mukirinyei; **Nandi:** Usuet; **Pokomo:** Munyiza; **Pokot:** Cheptuyis (plural), Cheptuya; **Sabaot:** Shiendet, Uswa, Wuswet, Cheptuishak; **Samburu:** Shinghe, Ilchinge, Lchinge; **Taita:** Mmbuku; **Teso:** Emus; **Tharaka:** Mukonde; **Tugen:** Uswet.

**DESCRIPTION:** An evergreen shrub, bush or small tree, usually 3–5 m, with dense foliage. **BARK:** Ash grey, darker, cracking and flaking with age. **LEAVES:** Mostly **opposite, but appear spiral**, dull green, stiff, long and narrowly oval to 8 cm, tip blunt, edge wavy, brownish **powdery scales below**. **FLOWERS:** Very **small, cream, sweet-scented**, in small sprays which persist on the tree. Male and female on separate trees. **FRUIT:** Small, round, **to 8 mm, green ripening purple-black** with thin edible flesh around the seeds.

**ECOLOGY:** A tree occurring from Sudan to southern Africa. Widely distributed throughout Kenya in subhumid and semi-arid bushland, woodland and disturbed dry upland forests, 0–2,500 m. Most common between 1,400 and 2,200 m. In lowlands, mainly found near watercourses and areas with groundwater, especially on black soil. Quickly becoming the dominant species after bush clearing, as on the Laikipia plateau and Loita highlands. Agroclimatic Zones II–V. Fruits in August in West Pokot.

**USES:** Firewood, timber (construction), tool handles, walking sticks, edible fruit, soup (bark added as an appetizer), medicine (roots, bark and leaves), fodder, bee forage, shade, dye (roots and bark), ceremonial, tooth-brushes, veterinary medicine.

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings. Produces root suckers.

**REMARKS:** Root suckers grow up some distance from the tree. The wood is hard and close grained. *E. divinorum* is one of the most important medicinal plants. Ripe fruits have edible pulp. Bark is added to soup together with *Rhamnus prinoides* as an appetizer (Kipsigis, Maasai). The wood is hard but the timber usually small; used for

building houses and grain stores. Branches used as toothbrushes (hence the Kikuyu and Mbeere names). The tree is used for ceremonies among the Pokot (regarded as a tree of peace) and the Tugen use the burning wood for smoking milk gourds. A closely related species is *E. racemosa* subsp. *schimperi* (syn. *E. schimperi*). This too has edible fruit and similar other uses. A black dye can be obtained from the roots. It is also common throughout the country. Another species, *E. natalensis*, has a mainly coastal distribution.

**FURTHER READING:** Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993 (*E. schimperi*); Dharani, 2002; ITDG and IIRR, 1996; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002.

