

Harrisonia abyssinica

Rutaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Boni:** Sauini; **Boran:** Raga; **Digo:** Chidori; **Giriana:** Mkithunga; **Kamba:** Mukiliulu; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Sipondwe; **Luo:** Pedo; **Malakote:** Gora; **Marakwet:** Kapkewelwa; **Orma:** Gora; **Pokomo:** Cheewa; **Pokot:** Mukurkona; **Samburu:** Lasaramai, Muruguti; **Swahili:** Msamburini, Mkidori; **Wardei:** Cidishabeel.

DESCRIPTION: A spiny scrambling shrub, bush or small tree with a **spreading, evergreen crown and drooping branches**. Branches armed with recurved (rarely straight) spines often in pairs. **BARK:** Pale, with **spine-tipped corky bosses** to 2 cm long. **LEAVES:** Compound, often with 3–7 pairs of leaflets plus a terminal one; leaflets to 4 cm long x 2 cm wide, usually much smaller, **asymmetric, margin irregularly toothed, leaf stalks conspicuously winged**, small prickles at the base of the leaf stalk. **FLOWER:** Small, white to yellow, in loosely branched heads to 15 cm long. **FRUIT:** **Round or lobed**, up to 1 cm in diameter, **red or black when mature**, fleshy, eaten by birds.

ECOLOGY: Occurs from Cameroon east to Ethiopia and Somalia and south to Angola and Mozambique. Widely distributed in Kenya from the coast to western and northern Kenya. Found especially in hot humid areas such as at the coast, the Lake Victoria basin and Eastern Province in dry bushland and wooded grassland, secondary scrub and in riverine vegetation. May form impenetrable thickets in dry areas. Common in disturbed ground such as abandoned farmland and roadsides. Agroclimatic Zones II–V. Flowering in November–December in Siaya and Bondo.

USES: Medicine (roots, bark), bee forage, ornamental, live fence, dry fencing (withies), veterinary medicine.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, root suckers.

MANAGEMENT: Stake the plant when the main stem is still weak until the plant can stand on its own. Prune lower branches regularly. This plant coppices very easily and may even be a nuisance in cropland.

REMARKS: A fairly fast-growing shrub with potential as a shade, ornamental and live-fence plant. May, however, get out of control due to the bushy and thorny nature, hence needs close attention. This species was formerly placed in the family Simaroubaceae.

FURTHER READING: Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; ITDG and IIRR, 1996; Kokwaro, 1993; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002.

