

*Landolphia buchananii*

## Apocynaceae

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Digo:** Mpira; **Kamba:** Kiongoa (Makueni), Maongoa (fruit); **Kikuyu:** Mugu, Mugu wa munyati; **Kipsigis:** Ngiingichet, Tunoiyet; **Maasai:** Entiangege (Narok); **Marakwet:** Ng'eng'echwo, Ng'eng'ech (plural); **Meru:** Muungu; **Nandi:** Ngungyet, Nyingiget; **Pokot:** Ng'eng'echwo, Ng'eng'eech (fruit); **Samburu:** Lkutetei, Sebit; **Swahili:** Mbungo.

**DESCRIPTION:** An extensive **strong-stemmed liana** to 20 m or more. Stems dark brown, flexible, strong, usually narrow, young stems with **tendrils** that are **branched at the tip**. The plant exudes **white latex** when any part is injured. **LEAVES:** Opposite, long, widest close to the middle, tip narrow but blunt. Young leaves tinged red. **FLOWERS:** **White**, tubular, borne in axillary (at angle between leaf and branch) or terminal heads. **FRUIT:** Round, 4–6 cm across, light green with **corky, grey-white or brown patches on the surface** of a tough rind. Ripe fruit the same colour, soft with several seeds embedded in a white juicy pulp.

**ECOLOGY:** Widely distributed from West Africa east to Ethiopia and south through eastern Africa and the Congo basin to Zimbabwe and Mozambique. In Kenya, found mainly in central and western parts, e.g. in Karura Forest, Thika, Namanga, Thui Hill (Makueni), Marsabit, Kisii, Nandi, Uasin Gishu, Baringo and Meru in hillside thickets and bushland, riverine forest in clay loam, especially on sloping rocky areas. Agroclimatic Zones II–IV. Fruits in February in Kisii, July–August in Machakos and Meru, October in Baringo and November–December in Kiambu.

**USES:** Edible fruit, medicine (ripe or unripe fruit, roots), fodder (leaves for goats and sheep), rope (branches), basketry, latex (rubber substitute).

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings, wildings.

**REMARKS:** The ripe fruit is eaten. The white juicy pulp has a sour sweet taste. Seeds are usually discarded. They are known to germinate readily after passing through animals' guts (e.g. monkeys). Unripe fruit is bitter. The pulp has been used to make jam. Branches used as string (Kikuyu), for tying beehives (Kamba), for building (Maasai, Kamba), and weaving baskets and winnowing trays (Kikuyu). The twigs used to be sold in the past (Mukuyuni, Makueni). The liana is cut, warmed in water to avoid snapping then rolled up in rings and sold as ropes. *Landolphia* is a genus of several dozen members found mainly on the Indian Ocean islands and in tropical Africa and America. Most members are latex-exuding lianas.

**FURTHER READING:** Beentje, 1994; Maundu et al., 1999.

