

***Landolphia kirkii***

Apocynaceae

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Boni:** Dabeh, Daber; **Digo:** Mpira, Libugu, Kitoria (fruit); **Giriama:** Mutongazi, Mtoria, Muungo; **Swahili:** Ulimbo, Mpira, Mbunga, Kilungwana, Moyo, Mpyo; **Taita:** Mmeru sukari.

**DESCRIPTION:** An evergreen climber 2–6 m, or sometimes a shrub. All parts exuding sticky white latex when injured. **BARK:** Smooth at first, then rough grey-brown. **Tendrils** to 15 cm (sometimes absent) are branched at the very tip. **LEAVES:** Small, opposite, long oval, variable but 3–8 cm long, tapering to a short blunt tip, hairy when young, later shiny. **FLOWERS:** Terminal loose heads of flowers or beside leaves, hardly stalked, each flower tubular, very small, white–pale pink. **FRUIT:** Rounded to oval, a many-seeded berry with a hard skin, to 15 cm, dull green but spotted—the size of an orange. The 4–5 ovoid seeds lie in juicy edible pulp.

**ECOLOGY:** A strong climber commonly found at forest edges and in *Brachystegia* and related woodlands from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya south to South Africa. In Kenya, restricted to the coastal belt, 0–300 m. Occurs in secondary forest or forest margins, secondary bushland in coastal sandy soils. Agroclimatic Zones II–III. Flowers in March and November and fruits in March–April and November–December in Kilifi.

**USES:** Edible fruit, medicine (leaves, roots), shade, gum (leaves, bark, fruit), dye.

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings, cuttings, wildings, root suckers. Raised fastest from cuttings or root suckers.

**MANAGEMENT:** Coppicing.

**REMARKS:** One of the most promising wild fruit species. The ripe fruit is edible and is sweet with an acid taste. It is cut in half and the yellow, juicy pulp eaten raw. The fruit is sold in most coastal towns including Mombasa, Malindi and Kilifi, where it is very popular. The latex is often used for trapping birds. This is a fast-growing climber which gives shade if grown in a woodlot. It can become a weed if not well managed. If grown along hedges and near trees where it can climb, this plant can be a good source of fruit for the household.

**FURTHER READING:** Beentje, 1994; Maundu et al., 1999; Ruffo et al., 2002.

