

Lepisanthes senegalensis

Sapindaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Luhya:** Musaretsi; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumwimbirichi; **Luo:** Ochol; **Maasai:** Oleragai; **Malakote:** Muqanto; **Samburu:** Ilkisiriko; **Tharaka:** Mukubu; **Turkana:** Kisriku.

DESCRIPTION: An evergreen tree, 6–21 m, with a heavy leafy crown. **BARK:** Smooth, pale grey-brown. **LEAVES:** **Compound, pinnate**, the leaf stalks to 10 cm and crimson when young as well as the lower midrib, **1–3 pairs of large leaflets, 8–19 cm**, the top pair always opposite, shortly stalked, slightly one-sided, the long tip blunt or rounded, drying grey-green above and paler below. **FLOWERS:** Small, yellow-green male and female flowers with a rather unpleasant smell, growing along loose branched heads from leaf axils, or all appearing terminal, **usually flowering with new leaf growth. Flowering heads 5–20 cm**, the young stalks with golden hairs, each flower with **5 white petals, to 4 mm**, with a **hairy fringe, 5–7 yellow stamens**. **FRUIT:** **Oval, red 12–18 mm**, containing 2 black seeds.

ECOLOGY: Found from West Africa to Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and south to Mozambique; also in India and Malaysia. Widely distributed in Kenya, from the coast to the west and north of the country, mainly in evergreen lowland, riverine and submontane forests. It is common on coral or lava rock in forests near the sea; 0–1,900 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–V. Fruits in June–July in Bungoma.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber, poles, furniture, tool handles, utensils (wooden spoons), edible fruit, medicine (root), shade, fish poison (flowers).

PROPAGATION: Seedlings.

SEED:

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Fresh seed should be used.

REMARKS: Leaves and seeds are reported to be poisonous to goats and the flowers to fish. The tree is rarely found in cropland but more often in homesteads and along farm boundaries. *Lepisanthes* is a genus with about 2 dozen species, occurring mainly in Africa and Asia.

FURTHER READING: Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Blundell, 1987; Ruffo et al., 2002; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990; Verheij and Coronel, 1991.

