

Maerua triphylla

Capparaceae

Indigenous

Common names: Eng: maerua, small bead bean; Fipa: nkana; Gogo: msinjisa mudo, mwimachigulu; Hehe: kipegero; **Iraqw:** bardiget; Nyam: kalilalila, kalilila; Pare: mdudu, mluhindi; **Samb:** mkundang'ombe; Suku: kidilalila; **Swah:** msingizi; Zara: msempelele, ududu kisazi; Zigua: mniramira; Zinza: mumemeno.

Ecology: A small densely branched evergreen tree or shrub, widely distributed in grassland and woodland from the coast to 2,000 m.

Uses: Bee forage, fodder (leaves), medicine, water purification.

Description: A small tree or shrub, usually to 4 m with a rounded crown. **BARK:** brownish-grey. **LEAVES:** dull green, **both simple** and trifoliolate, trifoliolate leaves having a larger central leaflet, narrowly **oval**, 2-10 cm long, **tip rounded, often notched**. **FLOWERS:** small, several flowers in a head, green-white, many **stamens prominent**, spreading **out** between 4 green sepals which are joined in a tube below the petals. **FRUIT:** on long **stalks**, variable, usually cylindrical, 5-10 **cm** long, pale yellow to **creamy brown and furry, often constricted between the seeds**.

Propagation Seedlings, root suckers.

Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: about 14,000. Germination very **good** and fast; 90% after 2 weeks.

treatment: not necessary.

storage: seeds perishable; should be sown fresh.

Management: Coppicing. -

Remarks: The branches and roots of several Maerua species contain toxic substances which may be a health risk when used clear water. The plant has been used as an aphrodisiac and to treat snake bite. It can be used to reclaim land on poor rocky sites.

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