

Margaritaria discoidea (Phyllanthus discoideus)

Euphorbiaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Giriama:** Mukololo; **Kikuyu:** Mukarara; **Luo:** Atego, Otego; **Meru:** Mugaruturu; **Swahili:** Mjangari; **Teso:** Lusengo; **Tugen:** TusuanDET.

DESCRIPTION: A deciduous tree to 25 m high, occasionally a shrub but very variable depending on the habitat. Usually branched near the base, spreading and drooping branch-lets. Branches on young trees are at right angles to the trunk. **BARK:** Thin, smooth grey-brown, slightly fissured, becoming rough and fibrous and scaling in big pieces with age. **LEAVES:** Simple, alternate, sometimes appear compound on young shoots, variable in size, **oval, bright green and thin**, about 10 cm, **veins indistinct**, edge of leaf clear when held up to the light. **FLOWERS:** Male and female on separate trees; flowers small and inconspicuous, **green-yellow and fragrant**, appear on the bare tree. **FRUIT:** **Yellow-brown 3-part capsule, 1 cm or less**, breaking open to set free **3 blue-black metallic-shiny seeds**.

ECOLOGY: A widespread African tree distributed from Senegal east to Sudan and south to Angola and South Africa. In Kenya, widely distributed from the coast to western parts of the country in moist or dry forest margins and forest remnants. It is often a pioneer of lowland forests; 0–2,000 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–IV.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber (cabinet work), poles, medicine (roots).

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, wildings, direct sowing at site.

SEED: Seeds prolifically. Unopened capsules can be collected from under the mother tree, then crushed and the seeds separated from the chaff.

treatment: Soaking in cold water for 12 hours before sowing will hasten germination.

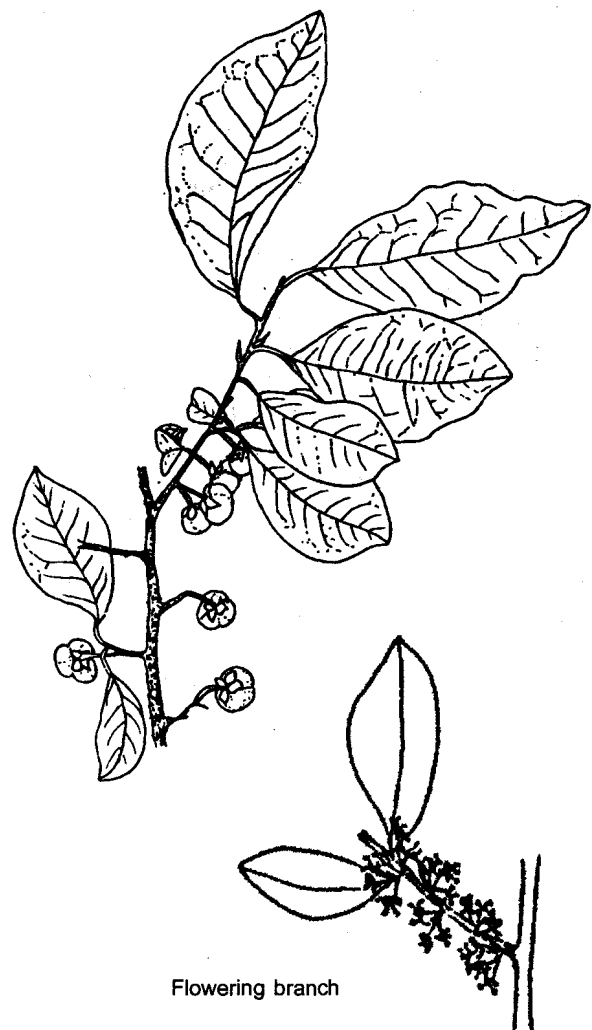
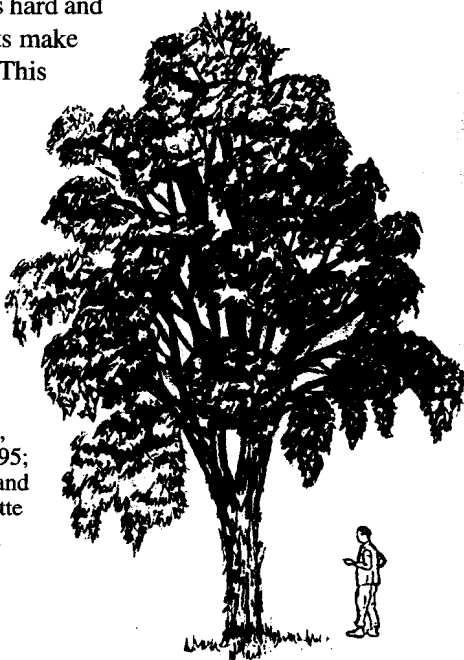
storage: Dried seed can be stored for some time in sealed containers in a cool place.

MANAGEMENT: Coppicing, pollarding, pruning.

REMARKS: The timber is hard and heavy. Coppice shoots make good building poles. This tree would be suitable for timber plantations and woodlots in areas where it occurs naturally.

Margaritaria is a genus of the tropics with about a dozen members.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990.



Flowering branch

