

Melia volkensii

Meliaceae

Indigenous**STANDARD/TRADE NAME:** Mukau.

COMMON NAMES: **Boran:** Bamba, Barnha; **Digo:** Kirumbuta; **Kamba:** Mukau; **Kikuyu:** Mukau; **Samburu:** Maramarui; **Somali:** Bamba; **Taita:** Kirumbutu; **Taveta:** Mkowe, Mukowe; **Tharaka:** Mukau.

DESCRIPTION: A deciduous tree, to 15 m, with a light, rounded or spreading crown and branches that hang down low. **BARK:** Grey, fairly smooth. **LEAVES:** Bright green, compound, leaflets many, each narrowing to the tip. **FLOWERS:** Dense, white, borne in a branching head. **FRUIT:** Yellow and oval to 4 cm long, conspicuous on the bare tree.

ECOLOGY: A valuable tree of semi-arid areas in Ethiopia and Somalia south to Tanzania. In Kenya, found in Kitui, Mwingi, Machakos, Embu, Taita, Samburu, Isiolo, Makueni, Voi, Tsavo National Park and Moyale in dry bushland or woodland and drier wooded grasslands. Found in the coastal hinterlands, but not very near the coast. When in leaf, noticeably green in dry areas; 400–1,650 m. Agroclimatic Zones V–VI. Flowers in October and seeds in March–August in Kitui and Makueni areas.

USES: Firewood, timber (construction, door frames), medicine (bark), fodder (fruit), bee forage, shade, mulch, soil conservation.

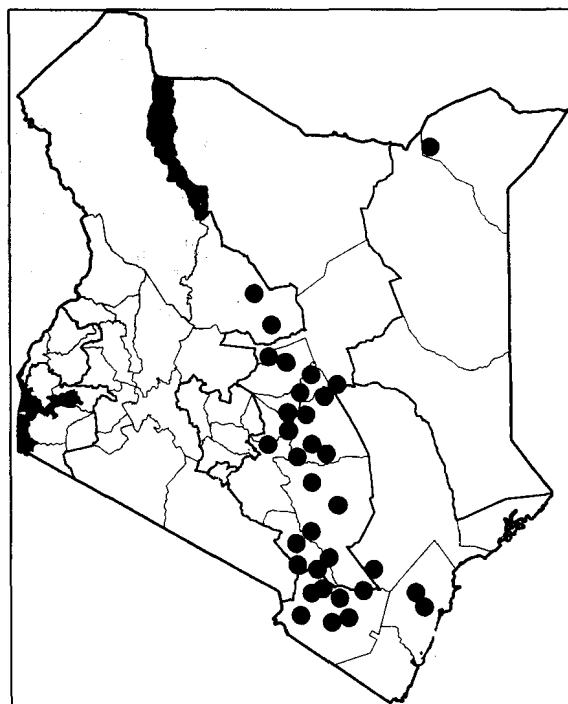
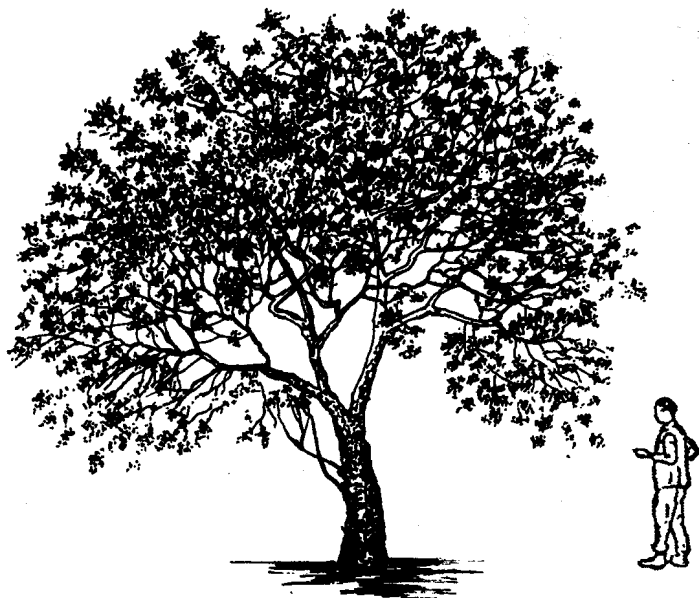
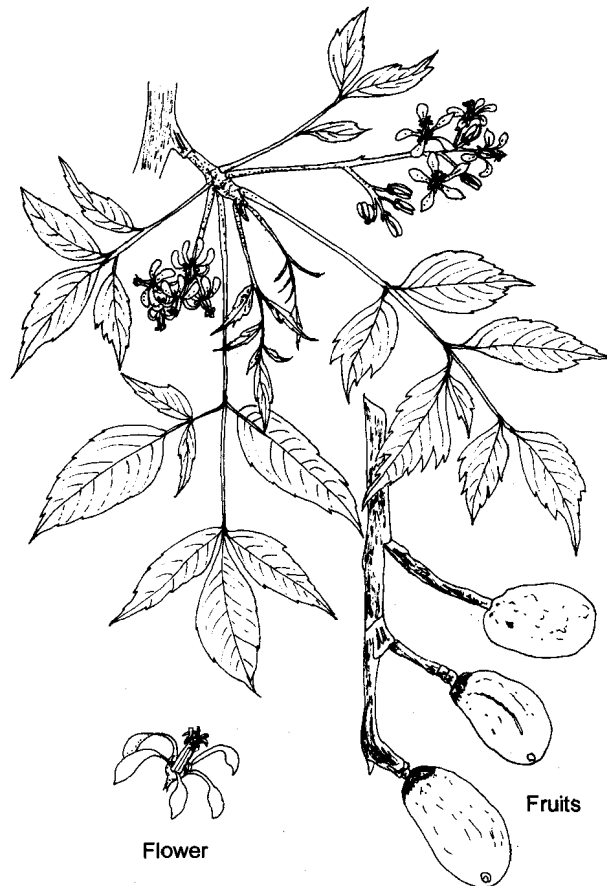
PROPAGATION: Seedlings, root cuttings or root suckers, wildlings. Use of root suckers is the best method. Collection of wildlings is a better option than seeds for raising seedlings in a nursery.

SEED: Seed germination is very difficult to achieve. Germination rate 40–80% at best, often lower, within 15–35 days; 200–300 stones per kg.

treatment: After collection, the fruit pulp is removed by pounding fruit in a mortar. Before sowing, the stones should be dried in the sun, and then cracked to release the seed. An alternative is to burn the berries lightly in a heap of trash, then soak the seeds in warm water and sow without storage.

storage: Seed storage is not recommended; use fresh seed.

MANAGEMENT: Fast growing if propagated using root suckers. Careful protection of young trees against goats; coppicing.



Melia volkensii (cont)

REMARKS: Wood hard, brown, and makes good timber, resistant to attack by borers. The Kamba make door frames from the wood. A highly prized tree in the dry areas where it is intercropped with food crops with no adverse effects and occasionally improved yields. Also kept around the homestead as a shade tree. An overdose of the medicine is poisonous. This is a very drought-resistant tree, more so than the related *Melia azedarach*. Under drought conditions, *M. volkensii* has an effective mechanism for accumulating water in all tissues for use in times of extreme water stress. The plant is deeply rooted and exhibits a good degree of resistance to attack by common insects.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Albrecht, 1993; Beentje, 1994; Kokwaro, 1993; Milimo, P. 1994 (<http://www.ifa.unimelb.edu.au/abstracts/phdabstract1994/milimo1994.htm>); Noad and Birnie, 1989.