

Meyna tetraphylla

Rubiaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: Boran: Qaaleda; Chonyi: Mtamba chiko; Giriama: Mtamba kiko; Kamba: Kitotoo, Kitolousuu; Kambe: Tamba kiko; Malakote: Mubururi; Marakwet: Tiling'wo, Tiliny (plural); Orma: Bururi; Pokot: Tiling'wo, Tiling (plural); Rendille: Yeho; Samburu: Ikerimichoi, Leturmet; Tharaka: Mukurungu, Ngurungu (fruit); Tugen: Tilingwo, Tilinyek (fruit); Turkana: Esugumaran.

DESCRIPTION: A spiny shrub, 2–4 m high with ascending branches and a narrow crown or, rarely, a liana. **BARK:** Grey-brown. Stems armed with **strong paired spines** growing horizontally above the leaf nodes. **LEAVES:** Yellow-green, slightly glossy. **FLOWERS:** Cream-green, densely clustered in leaf axils. **FRUIT:** A more or less round 5-angled berry up to 2 cm across.

ECOLOGY: Occurs in eastern Africa, southern Ethiopia, Somalia and the Comoro Islands. In Kenya, for example in Kitui, Turkana, Baringo and Samburu, 0–1,100 m, in riverine bushland and along seasonal watercourses in dry country. At the coast, also in bushland away from watercourses. Mainly rocky and sandy soils. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV (coast)–VII (riverine).

USES: Edible fruit, medicine (roots), veterinary medicine (leaves), live fence.

REMARKS: Ripe fruit fleshy, sweet and much liked by pastoralists. The plant has good potential for live fencing. *Meyna* is a genus of about a dozen species found in Africa and the Indian Ocean islands to South East Asia. Many of the members of the closely related genera *Keetia*, *Psydrax* and *Multidentia* have edible fruit too. A species often confused with *Meyna tetraphylla* is *Canthium glaucum* (Boran: Ladana; Chonyi: Mtamba chiko; Giriama: Mfuranje; Kambe: Mtamba chiko; Pokot: Molkotwo; Somali: Natana; Swahili: Mtengeji, Turkana: Emidakan, Etoukoroe), a spiny shrub usually 2–4 m high. Bark brown to grey. Leaves with very short stalks, elliptic, usually 2–5 cm long, borne at nodes or on short shoots below the paired spines. Flowers in groups, few, greenish. Fruit square in outline, green, turning yellow-orange when ripe. Found in coastal bushland and forest, usually in open places with deep sandy soils, 0–150 m, e.g. in Marafa and Arabuko-Sokoke Forest (Kilifi). Also in *Combretum* woodland at higher altitude; 0–800 m. Fruits in March–April (Sabaki), April–June (Kilifi, Malindi). Like *Meyna*, this species has potential for live fencing.

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

