

Mimusops kummel**Sapotaceae****Indigenous**

COMMON NAMES: **English:** Mimusops, Milkwood, Red milkwood; **Kikuyu:** Mugumo ciano; **Luo:** Nyabondo, Ochond achak; **Mbeere:** Mugumo ciano; **Pokot:** Chemalokutan, Pusyooni; **Tugen:** Lolowa.

DESCRIPTION: An evergreen tree that can reach 35 m and have a diameter of more than 1 m, the crown leafy and oval. **BARK:** Dark grey, rough and deeply grooved, **branchlets covered with red-brown hairs.** **LEAVES:** Oval to 10 cm, the tip blunt, the **midrib below hairy** and also **the leaf stalk to 15 mm.** **FLOWERS:** Fragrant, cream-white, 1–4 in leaf axils, on stalks to 2–5 cm. Flower parts in 4s, rather flat, star-shaped, **stalks and outer calyx with brown hairs**, central ovary with silky pale hairs. **FRUIT:** A **drupe to 2 cm**, pointed and orange-yellow, contains **one red-brown seed.**

ECOLOGY: A widespread eastern African tree extending to Ethiopia and Eritrea, Sudan and to West Africa in riverine vegetation and also in dry evergreen forest, in wooded grassland and on rocky hills in dry areas. In Kenya, found around Nairobi (e.g. Kiambu, Ngong Forest) and westwards to Nyanza Province in riparian vegetation and dry forests, 500–2,250 m. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber (construction), beehives, tool handles, carvings, utensils, edible fruit, drink (inner bark for tea, dried fruit powder used for making juice or brew), medicine, shade.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings (sow seed in pots), wildings.

SEED: Seed contained in the drupe. Remove outer coat to release seed.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods. Add ash to reduce insect damage.

MANAGEMENT: Pruning, lopping, pollarding.

REMARKS: The wood is hard and heavy. *M. kummel* is a good fruit tree that would be worth domestication efforts. A related species is *M. bagshawei* (**Kipsigis:** Lalwet; **Luhya:** Ludolia; **Maasai:** Olalwait; **Nandi:** Leliat), only found to the west of the Rift Valley in riverine and moist forests. It is a tree to 30 m, often with a rough bark. Leaves clustered at the end of branchlets, up to 5 x 14 cm, usually widest in the middle but narrowing abruptly near the tip. Flowers are greenish to cream, small. Fruit slightly elongate, pointed, up to 3 cm long, orange-yellow when ripe, edible. The flower stalk in *M. kummel* is longer than in *M. bagshawei*.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Katende et al., 1995; Maundu et al., 1999; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Ruffo et al., 2002.

