

Mkilua fragrans

Annonaceae

Indigenous

STANDARD/TRADE NAMES: Mkilua.

COMMON NAMES: **Digo**: Chingade; **Giriama**: Mkilua; **Swahili**: Mkilua, Mlua.

DESCRIPTION: A shrub or occasionally a tree to 8 m.

LEAVES: Alternate, usually large, to 15 cm long, widest in the middle, **base asymmetric, tip blunt, stalk very short, not more than 2 mm long.** FLOWERS: Hanging on a long stalk, petals pale yellow to orange, outer ones large, to 3.5 cm, inner ones to 2 cm. FRUIT: Parts (monocarps) numerous, **elongate up to 1 x 5 cm, red.**

ECOLOGY: Found only in north-east Tanzania near the Kenyan border, Zanzibar and coastal Kenya in moist evergreen forest and well-drained sandy soil, 0–450 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–IV.

USES: Firewood, posts, medicine (roots), ornamental, perfume, ceremonial.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings.

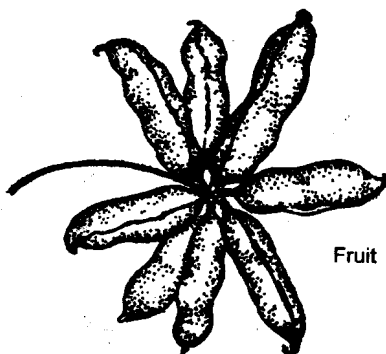
REMARKS: The genus *Mkilua* is typified by this one species native to the East African coast, where it is also grown for its flowers. Now it is cultivated in many parts of the world. The relatively large flowers are used as a source of aroma. Wreaths are made from flowers of this species and those of species such as ylang-ylang (or the perfume tree *Cananga odorata*) and *Jasminum* and worn during weddings ceremonies, particularly by the Swahili.

Cananga odorata, in the same family (Annonaceae), is also grown at the coast for its sweetly scented flowers. A native of Indo-Malaysia it is now grown throughout India and the Pacific Ocean islands. It grows to a tree 10 m high or more. Leaves medium-green, alternate, arranged on one plane on the branch, each widest towards the base and narrowing to a pointed tip. Flowers are sweet smelling, large with long narrow almost linear yellow to yellow-green trailing petals. Monocarps are several to many, black, short and ovoid. The plant is propagated by seed (takes time to germinate) or cuttings mainly as an ornamental, but has escaped and become naturalized in some parts of the world. It needs a warm, moist climate. The plant is the source of ylang-ylang oil used in perfumery and medicines.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.org/pier/caodo.htm>; Beentje, 1994.



Branch bearing a flower (petals have dropped)



Fruit monocarps

