

Monodora grandidieri

Annonaceae

Indigenous**COMMON NAMES:** Giriama: Mudzala simba.**DESCRIPTION:** A shrub, scrambler or a small tree to 6 m.

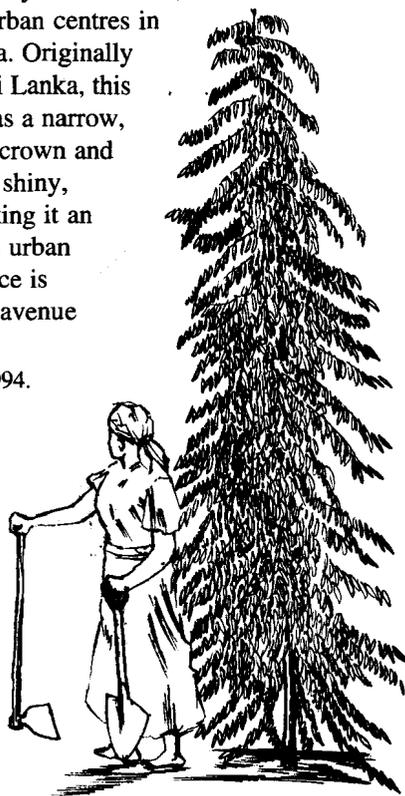
LEAVES: Large, up to 8 x 20 cm, usually much smaller, base cordate (blunt) or slightly heart-shaped, leaf blade widening towards the tip then narrowing abruptly to a sharp tip. **FLOWERS:** Large, outer petals to about 6 cm; borne singly on a long stalk arising from branch tips or sides; appearing with young leaves or sometimes before, yellow-white with pinkish to red streaks along the petals. **FRUIT:** Rounded or slightly elongate to about 4 x 7 cm, green with white marks.

ECOLOGY: A shrub of the eastern African coast found in evergreen forest, *Brachystegia* woodland, thickets, bushland, cashew nut plantations, 0–400 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–IV. Flowers in March and July, fruits in May and October at the coast.

USES: Bows, withies for building, edible fruit, medicine.**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings, wildings.**REMARKS:** The plant is much liked by elephants.

M. myristica (**English:** Calabash nutmeg; **Luhya:** Lubushi) is a large deciduous tree found in Kakamega Forest. Leaves are very large, to 30 cm or more, base rounded or slightly heart-shaped. Flowers large, yellow-white, solitary, outer petals to 10 cm. Fruit to 20 cm or more. It is mainly riverine in Kakamega Forest. The plant is a source of firewood and medicine. Fruits are said to be edible and elsewhere the seeds are used like nutmeg. The genus *Monodora* has about a dozen members, all of African origin.

A recently introduced tree, *Polyalthia longifolia*, or the mast tree, also in the family Annonaceae, is now the most popular ornamental in urban centres in the coastal part of Kenya. Originally from South India and Sri Lanka, this strikingly upright tree has a narrow, almost columnar, dense crown and drooping branches with shiny, long narrow leaves, making it an ideal choice for built-up urban environments where space is limited. It is a beautiful avenue tree.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994.*Polyalthia longifolia*