

***Olea capensis* subsp. *macrocarpa* (*O. hochstetteri*)**

Oleaceae

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **English:** East African olive, Elgon olive; **Keiyo:** Loliondet, Bomondet; **Kikuyu:** Mucarage; **Luhya:** Omutukuyu, Mutukuyu; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumutamaywa; **Kipsigis:** Msaita; **Maasai:** Ololiondoi, Ololiondo; **Marakwet:** Musat; **Meru:** Muukuru, Mucharage; **Nandi:** Murguiywet, Murguiwet; **Ogiek:** Muruguguyet, Masaieta, Mosaita; **Pokot:** Muruguyet; **Sabaot:** Masgat; **Samburu:** Loliontoi; **Turkana:** Eikwangat.

**DESCRIPTION:** A tree to 20 m or more with a straight bole, large ascending branches and a small crown. Smaller branches whitish-grey to light brown with conspicuous lenticels. **BARK:** Pale grey to white, smooth or grooved vertically. **LEAVES:** Stiff, in opposite pairs, **underside not white** (in contrast to *O. europaea* subsp. *cuspidata*). Widest in the middle, **up to 9 x 3 cm (2–3 times as long as wide)**, usually **sharply tipped, leaf stalk 1–1.5 cm long**, margin wavy, midrib pale and clear below, with scales. **FLOWERS:** Very many, small and white, in sprays to 8 cm long at the tip of branchlets. **FRUIT:** Purple with pointed apex. Oval, about 2 cm long.

**ECOLOGY:** A tree found from Ethiopia to West and Central Africa and south through Kenya, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo to Angola and South Africa. Mainly found in upland dry evergreen forest. Found in similar places to *O. europaea* subsp. *cuspidata* but preferring higher-rainfall forest. In Kenya, widely distributed, occurring from Coast Province (Taita Hills) through to Western and Nyanza Provinces and also highland parts of northern Kenya. Altitude 1,100–2,600 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–III.

**USES:** Firewood (branches), charcoal, timber, furniture, veneer, panelling, flooring, tool handles, medicine (bark), bee forage, ceremonial (Maasai).

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings, wildings.

**SEED:** Slow germination; 1,500–3,000 seeds per kg. Pulp should be separated from the seed by rubbing and cleaning in running water. Then dry seed for storage or sow immediately.

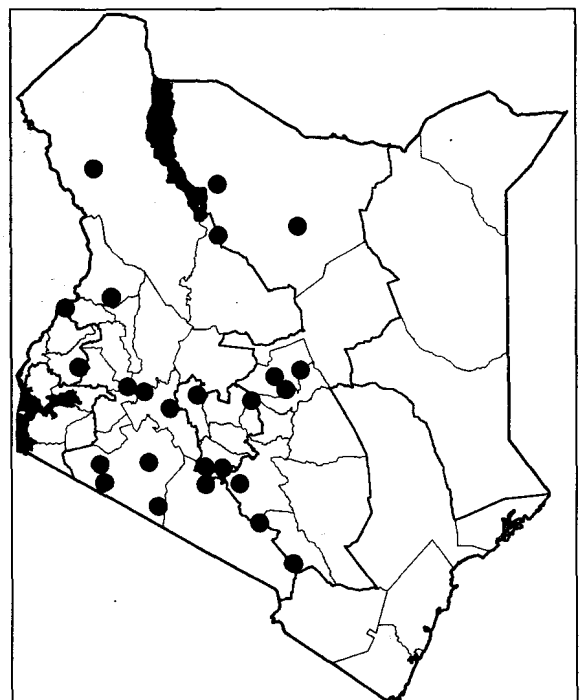
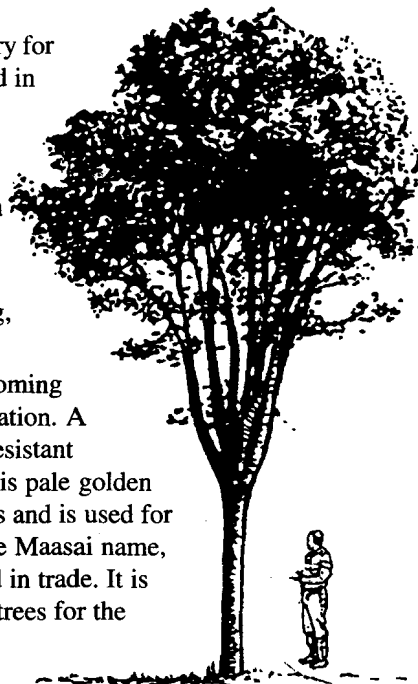
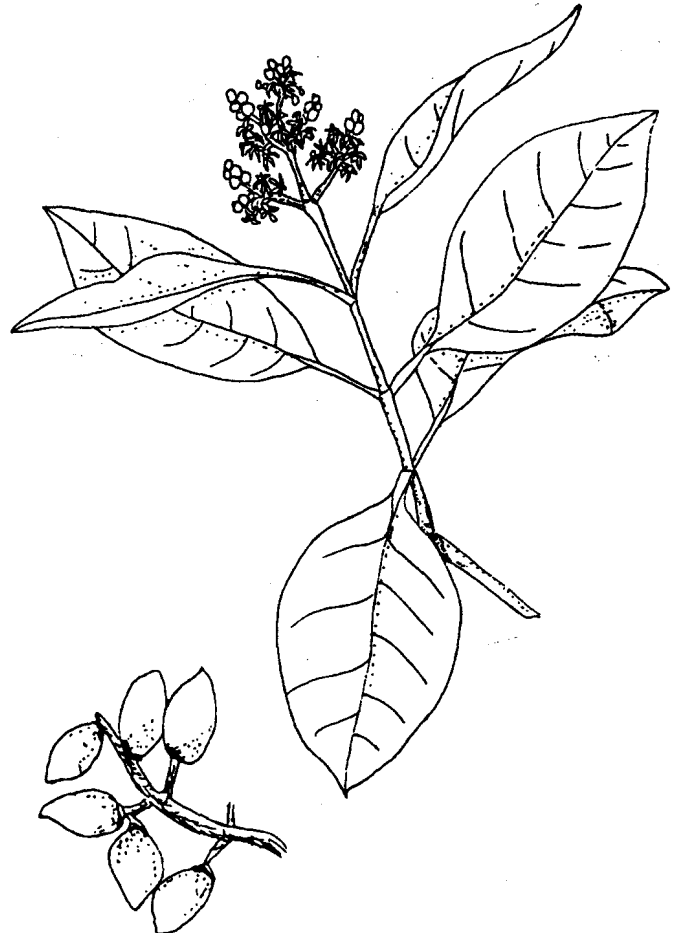
**treatment:** Not necessary for fresh seed, soak dry seed in cold water for 48 hours.

**storage:** Seed can be stored for some months, but it is best to use fresh seed.

**MANAGEMENT:** Slow growing; lopping, pollarding, coppicing when young.

**REMARKS:** This tree is becoming rare due to over-exploitation. A very valuable termite-resistant timber tree. The timber is pale golden brown with paler streaks and is used for high-class furniture. The Maasai name, 'Loliondo' is often used in trade. It is among the most sacred trees for the Maasai, who shout the name to show the

seriousness of a situation or matter. Neither do the Maasai use it as firewood. Over-exploitation has made it rare in Kenya. A closely related species, *O. welwitschii* (**English:** Elgon olive; **Kipsigis:** Msaita; **Luhya:** Mutukuyu; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumutamaywa; **Nandi:** Murguiywet, Murguiwet; **Sabaot:** Masgat) is distinguished from the above species in that the leaf is nar-



## *Olea capensis* subsp. *macrocarpa* (cont)

rower, to 5 x 15 cm (3–4 times as long as wide), on a stalk about 2–4 cm long, the tip drawn out and pointed. The fruit is narrowly oval, about 1 cm long. This species had briefly been put under *O. capensis* but is now recognized as separate. The 2 are easily distinguished by the leaves. This is a tall tree to 25 m or more, and often with a straight bole, narrow crown and occasionally buttressed. Branches are grey but with less prominent lenticels. Flowers small, numerous, white, borne on a large, sparsely branched flower head appearing at branch tips. This species occurs from eastern Africa south to

Zambia and Angola in lowland as well as upland ever-green forests. In Kenya it is mainly found in the western region. The wood is used in construction and for timber. Planting should be encouraged. The genus *Olea*, with about 20 species, is mainly found in the Old World.

**FURTHER READING:** <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Albrecht, 1993; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Beentje, 1994; Fichtl and Adi, 1994 (subsp. *hochstetteri*); Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Mbuya et al., 1994; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990 (subsp. *hochstetteri*).

