

Osyris lanceolata

Santalaceae

Indigenous**STANDARD/TRADE NAMES:** East African sandalwood.**COMMON NAMES:** **English:** East African sandalwood; **Kamba:** Kithawa; **Kikuyu:** Muthithii; **Kipsigis:** Kepurwet; **Maasai:** Ololesiai; **Marakwet:** Jemokabyi; **Meru:** Muchai; **Pokot:** Murrurwo; **Swahili:** Msandali; **Taita:** Kijulu.**DESCRIPTION:** An evergreen shrub or small tree 1–6 m, smaller branches drooping. **BARK:** Smooth, grey, later thick and rough, branchlets obscurely angled. **LEAVES:** Simple and alternate, crowded along the stems, grey, blue or yellow-green, slightly fleshy, becoming tough and leathery, narrow oval, 1–7 cm long with a fine sharp tip, **edge tightly rolled under, the 2-mm stalk runs down the stem forming a ridge.** **FLOWERS:** Small, pale yellow-green on few-flowered short heads from leaf axils, sepal tube pale green with 3–6 lobes that are yellow-green like the disc, dull orange-green anthers. **FRUIT:** Waxy, oval–rounded berries about 1 cm long, **green-yellow ripening shiny red**, fleshy and edible, containing one seed.**ECOLOGY:** Distributed in Ethiopia, Kenya, Burundi and south to South Africa. In Kenya, found from Taita District and much of Eastern Province westwards to western Kenya. Normally found in rocky sites where the original vegetation has been cleared. Also in margins of dry forests, evergreen bushland, grassland, thicket, 900–2,550m. Agroclimatic Zones II–IV.**USES:** Firewood, timber, poles, utensils (pestles), edible fruit (fresh, seeds discarded, eaten only in emergencies), drink (tea made from the roots and bark, tonic in soup), medicine (bark, roots), ornamental, soil conservation, fibre, dye (red, from the roots), perfume (wood, roots).**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings, root suckers.**SEED:** 10,000–11,000 seeds per kg.**treatment:** No pretreatment is required, but nicking the base of the seed improves germination. Germination reaches 60% after 6 weeks.**storage:** The seeds cannot be stored.**MANAGEMENT:** Very slow growing. Requires the shade of nurse trees in the early stages of growth.**REMARKS:** An endangered tree, having been heavily exploited in the past for extraction of perfume. Farmers should be encouraged to plant this tree on their farmlands. Bedsteads are made from the fragrant timber. Roots and bark provide a blood tonic. The genus *Osyris* has only a few members, mainly in Africa, Europe and Asia.**FURTHER READING:** Beentje, 1994; Mbuya et al., 1994; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Ruffo et al., 2002.