

**Phoenix reclinata**

## Arecaceae (Palmae)

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Boni:** Gonyooriya; **Boran:** Meti; **Digo:** Mchindu, Makindu; **English:** Wild date palm, Dwarf date palm; **Giriama:** Mkindu, Mkindwi, Kindwi (fruit); **Kamba:** Mukindu; **Kikuyu:** Mukindu; **Kipsigis:** Sosiyot; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumukhendu; **Luhya (Marachi):** Lushindu; **Luo:** Othith; **Maasai:** Oltukai; **Malakote:** Gedo; **Orma:** Konchor; **Pokomo:** Mkindu; **Samburu:** Lekawai; **Sanya:** Itkindu, Gonyora; **Somali:** Alol, Alool, Maleqa; **Swahili:** Mkindu; **Taita:** Kigangachi; **Taveta:** Mhongana; **Teso:** Emusogot; **Tharaka:** Mukiindu; **Turkana:** Nakadoki.

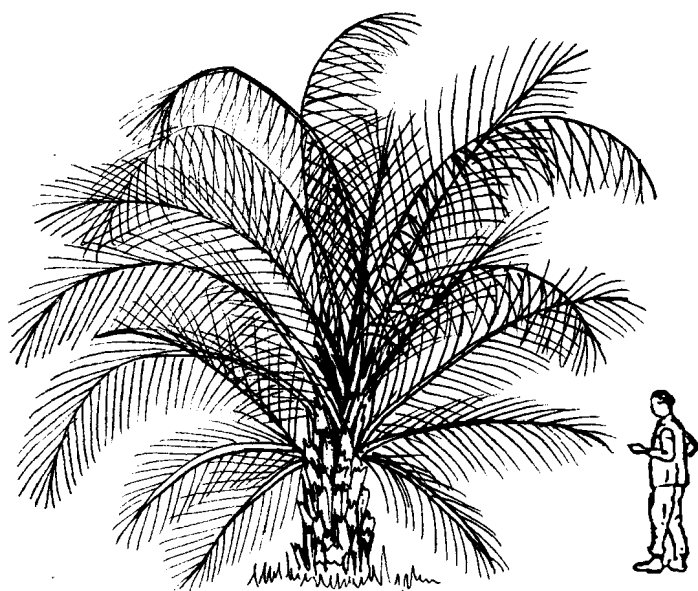
**DESCRIPTION:** A palm tree usually to 15 m high, but may attain a height of 30 m in forest (e.g. lower parts of Tana River). The tree has a creeping rootstock. The mature palm trunk is usually slender and **often bent over** ('reclinata'), about 25 cm in diameter, covered in very rough leaf scars. **LEAVES:** To 2.7 m long, growing out from a fibrous leaf sheath, the crown of about 25 leaves arching over, **leaflets narrow, folded, bright shiny green, to 30 cm**, stiff and pointed. Lower leaflets spiny to 6 cm long, leaf stalk up to 50 cm. **FLOWERS:** Male and female on different trees. Male flowers cream-brown, to 7 mm, female flowers greenish, 2 mm. **FRUIT: Yellow-brown, about 2 cm, edible.**

**ECOLOGY:** Found throughout tropical Africa. In high-rainfall areas it will grow on open rocky hillsides and cliffs, as well as in rainforests, but only along watercourses in dry country. Widely distributed in Kenya, e.g. in Loita forest, Nandi Hills and the Tana River basin. Cultivated in towns as an ornamental. Often growing in dense clumps along watercourses and at forest edges, 0–2,600 m, occasionally higher. Agroclimatic Zones II–VII (only riverine in the driest areas). Flowers in October–November in Nairobi; immature fruit seen in January, which reach maturity in March–May in Nairobi.

**USES:** Firewood, beds, edible fruit, drink (palm wine), bee forage, ornamental, river-bank stabilization, thatch (leaves), mats and baskets (leaves), dye (roots), ceremonial, fire making.

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings, suckers.

**SEED:** 900–5,000 seeds per kg. Remove fruit pulp and dry



before storage. Germination is good and best for fresh seed.

**treatment:** Not necessary.

**storage:** Seed can be stored for long periods.

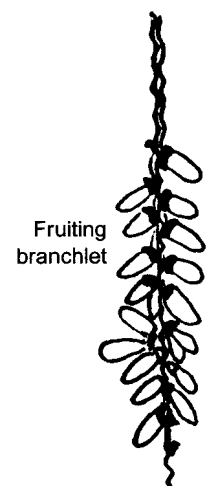
**MANAGEMENT:** Removal of leaf stalks and root suckers for ornamentals.

**REMARKS:** Ripe fruit edible. Palm wine (Tharaka, Pokomo). Leaf stems used to clean the inside of milk gourds (Maasai, Kipsigis). Roots a source of brown dye (Kikuyu). The leaf stems (rachis) are used to make traditional beds (Somali). This palm is over-exploited in northern and north-eastern Kenya for its use in handicrafts. Used a great deal by the Pokomo along the Tana River for mats (for sleeping on and resting), baskets, hats, etc.

**FURTHER READING:** <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Dharani, 2002; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Katende et al., 1995, 1999; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Ruffo et al., 2002; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990; Storrs, 1979.



Flowering branchlet



Fruiting branchlet

