

***Rhus natalensis*****Anacardiaceae****Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Boni:** Idamula; **Boran:** Daboobes, Adesa; **Digo:** Mgwanyahi, Mbwananyahi; **English:** Natal rhus; **Gabra:** Dabobbessa; **Ilchamus:** Lmisigiyo, Lmisigiyo; **Kamba:** Mtheu, Ntheu (fruit); **Kikuyu:** Muthigio; **Kipsigis:** Suriat; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Busangura nabili (fruit), Kumusangura nabili (tree); **Luhya (Tachoni):** Obusangura, Busecha (fruit); **Luo:** Sangla, Osangla; **Maasai:** Olmisigiyo, Ilmisigiyo (plural); **Mbeere:** Muthanguta, Mtheru, Muthigiyo, Muthiigi; **Meru:** Murikitha; **Nandi:** Monjororoyot; **Ogiek:** Sirontet; **Pokot:** Siriewo, Siria (plural); **Sabaot:** Sirwa; **Samburu:** Ilmisingiyot, Lmisigiyo; **Swahili:** Mtishangwe, Mvunja kondo, Mkuna chuma, Mkono chuma; **Taita:** Kitarika; **Teso:** Ewayo, Ebubu; **Tugen:** Siriande; **Turkana:** Ekadetewa.

**DESCRIPTION:** A many-branched shrub or tree, sometimes tending to scramble, up to 8 m in height. **BARK:** Grey, often almost white, branchlets pale and dotted with breathing pores, **branches angular.** **LEAVES:** 3 leaflets, the central one largest, to 9 cm, usually dark green, rather leathery, hairless, sometimes toothed, very variable, wider towards the tip, narrowed to the base, on a stalk 2–4 cm. **FLOWERS:** Green-yellow with tiny flowers in loose heads to 15 cm. **FRUIT:** Oblong to bean-shaped, smooth, red with thin flesh and a waxy covering, about 5 mm, edible. The dry papery fruits soon fall.

**ECOLOGY:** Widespread in Africa from Guinea to Somalia and south to South Africa. Also in the Arabian peninsula. In Kenya it is found in most areas except the driest parts. It is usually found in wooded savanna, at forest edges and beside rivers, 0–3,000 m. Agroclimatic Zones I–V. Flowers in January–April and fruits in March–June in Bungoma.

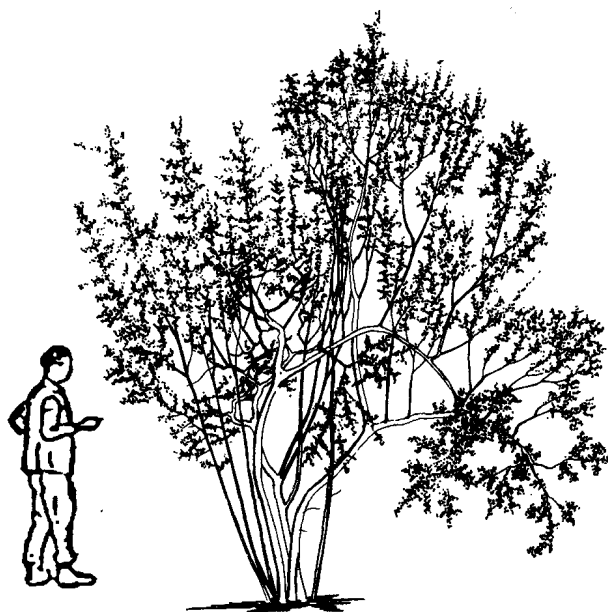
**USES:** Firewood, charcoal, timber, edible fruit, medicine (leaves, roots, bark), fodder, ornamental, shade, dye (bark of roots), toothbrushes.

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings.

**SEED:** 26,000–30,000 seeds per kg.

**treatment:** Not necessary. Germination is fast and good.

**storage:** Remains viable for only about 3 months at room temperature.



**MANAGEMENT:** Coppicing, pruning, pollarding.

**REMARKS:** This is the most widespread and commonest *Rhus* species in the country. All species in the genus *Rhus* in Kenya have edible fruit. They are a good source of toothbrushes and the wood burns well. Because they share many characteristics they are usually known locally by the same names.

**FURTHER READING:** Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Blundell, 1987; Dharani, 2002; Katende et al., 1999; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Ruffo et al., 2002.

