

***Rubus apetalus* (*R. rigidus*, *R. adolfi-friedericii*)**

Rosaceae

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Kikuyu:** Mutare; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Bukararambi; **Luhya (Tachoni):** Obukararambi; **Luo:** Onunga; **Maasai:** Olayakuji, Ngayakuji; **Taita:** Ndaindai.

**DESCRIPTION:** A scrambling shrub to 2.5 m with scattered hooked spines on the stems. Branches hairy. **LEAVES:** With 3–7 leaflets, with a single leaflet at the tip, each leaflet to 9 cm long, oval or ellipse-shaped, softly hairy, pale green beneath with toothed margins. Petals to 9 mm. **FLOWERS:** With small pale pink petals or none, in branched flower heads to 21 cm long. **FRUIT:** Consisting of many parts. Light green, turning yellow to purple-black on ripening.

**ECOLOGY:** From West Africa to Ethiopia and south to Malawi. Widely distributed in Kenya, e.g. in the Nyambene Hills, Mt Nyiru, Mt Kulal, Kandara (Maragua), Chania Falls, Ngong Hills, Maasai Mara, Meru, Kisii, Migori and Marsabit in riverine vegetation, at forest edges, in humid bushland and disturbed areas or near hillside springs, 1,450–2,700 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–III. Flowers throughout the year.

**USES:** Edible fruit, medicine (roots), live fence, ornamental.

**PROPAGATION:** Propagated vegetatively: use root suckers or divisions of plants. Branches may root when they touch the ground.

**SEED:** Seed not used.

**MANAGEMENT:** Trim and control as a live fence.

**REMARKS:** Fruits edible, with a sweet–acid taste. Honeybees collect pollen and nectar from the flowers frequently. A species with the potential for use as a live fence and ornamental.

As many as 9 species of *Rubus* are found wild in Kenya. Many of these have edible fruit and are potentially good as live hedge plants or ornamentals. A few are very closely related and therefore difficult to distinguish. ***R. pinnatus* (Embu:** Mutare, Ndare (fruit); **Kamba:** Kitae, Ndae (fruit); **Kikuyu:** Mutare, Ndare (fruit); **Kipsigis:** Tangaimamiet; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Bukararambi; **Luhya (Tachoni):** Obukararambi; **Maasai:** Engaiyaguji; **Marakwet:** Momoon; **Meru:** Ntare; **Pokot:** Monmonwo, Monmoon (plural); **Swahili:** Matoje (fruit), Mtoje; **Taita:** Maratua; Ndaendae, Ndaindai; **Tugen:** Momonwo, Mowonwo) resembles *R. apetalus* but is less common. Stems are without hairs but may have a white bloom. Leaves almost hairless, with up to 9 leaflets. Flowers are in branched heads up to 36 cm long with tiny petals (or none), to 4 mm, and reddish black fruits on ripening. It is found in tropical Africa to South Africa in riverine vegetation, near springs and at forest edges, 1,500–2,750 m. Common in disturbed areas. Fruits are edible, sweet. May be used as a hedge plant.

**FURTHER READING:** Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Maundu et al., 1999; Ruffo et al., 2002.

