

Rubus volkensii

Rosaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Kikuyu:** Mutare kigombe, Mutare, Ndare (fruit), **Kipsigis:** Kipsoeniot, Nemingin, Tagaimamiet; **Maasai:** Engaiyaguji.

DESCRIPTION: A prickly shrub up to 4 m. Stems with hooked prickles, covered with brown sticky hairs. Prickles to 4 mm. **LEAVES:** Compound with up to and usually 5 leaflets, the stalks prickly. **Leaflets hairy**, with toothed margins, leaflets to 12 mm long, **the ones at the tip often incompletely divided**. **FLOWERS:** Yellow-white, borne in branched heads to 8 cm long. **FRUIT:** To 1.5 cm across, **orange to red** when ripe.

ECOLOGY: Found in Uganda, northern Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia. In Kenya, found in the central Kenya highlands and central and north Rift Valley region, e.g. Mt Elgon, Limuru, Lari, the Mau Range, Kericho and Aberdares at high-altitude forest edges and bushland, in *Hagenia-Hypericum* woodland, bamboo margins, 2,150–3,550 m. Agroclimatic Zones I–II. Fruits in December in Central Province.

USES: Edible fruit, live fence.

PROPAGATION: Propagated vegetatively: use root suckers or divisions of plant bases.

SEED: Seed normally not used.

MANAGEMENT: It is necessary to control its spread if used as a hedge.

REMARKS: The fruit is delicious. May be locally common. Many of the Kenyan *Rubus* species are edible. *R. steudneri* is also a high-altitude species found in upland forests of Central Kenya and Rift Valley, up to the bamboo zone (1,900–3,200 m). It is distinguished by its 3–5 leaflets that arise from one point. Flowers are white to mauve in branched heads to 30 cm. Fruits up to 1.5 cm across. *R. scheffleri*, usually with densely hairy red-to-black fruit, is found in central and north-western Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania at forest margins and in evergreen bushland. *R. niveus* (**Luhya:** Butunduli), distinguished by the white undersurface of the leaf and a white bloom on the stems, is believed to have been introduced from the Indian/Malayan region. It is naturalized in many forested areas. Also cultivated as an ornamental.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Maundu et al., 1999.

