

***Saba comorensis* (S. florida)**

Apocynaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Digo:** Muungo; **Kamba:** Kilia (Makueni), Kiongo (Kitui), Kiongo (Kitui), Kyongoa (Kitui), Mongoa (fruits, Kitui); **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumuchabungwe (plant), Kamachabungwe (fruit); **Luo:** Abuno, Abuna, Jobune; **Malakote:** Loguo; **Marakwet:** Ochon; **Mbeere:** Mungo, Rwonge; **Pokomo:** Maungo, Muungo, Mbwiga; **Somali:** Dhangalow, Dongola, Dakaja; **Swahili:** Mbungo, Mpira, Bungo (fruit); **Taita:** Meru, Mameru (plural), Ndimu; **Taveta:** Ivungu.

DESCRIPTION: An **extensive liana** climbing up to the tops of trees and capable of creeping over low bushes for over 50 m. **Stems hairless and reddish, dotted with white breathing pores (lenticels) with long, brown tendrils to 12 cm or more.** All parts of the plant exuding milky white latex when injured. **LEAVES:** Large, **leathery**, dark green, glossy, often with a rounded tip. **FLOWERS:** In **dense terminal clusters, white with a yellow throat**, scented, corolla tubular. **FRUIT:** **Light green, large**, the size of a small orange (**up to 7 cm across**), **turning yellow to orange-brown on ripening**, coat drying to a hard brown shell. Seeds numerous, embedded in a brown pulp.

ECOLOGY: Widespread in West Africa through Central Africa to Ethiopia and southern Somalia, and south to Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi. Found in most parts of Kenya (except the dry north), e.g. in Thui Hill (Makueni), Kitui Hills and Nzeeu River (Kitui), Kuja and Ongoche Rivers (Migori), Cherangani, Muhoroni, Bungoma, Kihanja, Pengo Hill (Kwale), Wundanyi, Witu, Murang'a and along the Thiba River. Usually in riverine vegetation, on rocky hillsides, often forming thickets, or in lowland evergreen forest on alluvial, sandy clay or on rocky ground, 0–1,800 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–III. Flowers in September–November in Siaya, Kwale and Taita, in March in Kitui and Makueni. Fruits in April in Kitui and in August in Migori, Bungoma and Kitui, in September in Makueni and Kitui.

USES: Edible fruit, medicine, ornamental, weaving material for granaries, gum.

PROPAGATION: Propagated by seed. Reported to grow from cuttings too.

SEED: Collected at the end of the rainy season and beginning of the dry season.

treatment: Germinates readily after passing through animal gut. Hot water treatment may be a substitute for that.

storage: Not to be stored.

REMARKS: Ripe fruits burst open when pressed. Seeds are sucked and discarded. Fruit have a sweet–acid taste and are much liked by both children and adults. Can be used as a climber on a live fence or as an ornamental. It has beautiful flowers and leaves and the flowers are fragrant. Generally rare but locally common in a few areas. Much reduced in recent years due to encroachment into its habitats.

FURTHER READING: Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Blundell, 1987; Katende et al., 1999; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Ruffo et al., 2002.

