

*Sapium ellipticum*

## Euphorbiaceae

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Kikuyu:** Muhathi, Muthathi; **Luhya:** Mugoso; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumuchaso, Kumuchaswa; **Luo:** Amoyo, Achak, Achaka, Nyalewe yom; **Nandi:** Mseset; **Samburu:** Ngereni.

**DESCRIPTION:** A small- to medium-sized deciduous tree occasionally reaching 20 m. The trunk may be crooked; drooping branches arise low down giving a spreading crown. **BARK:** Light brown to almost black, rough, **branches tending to droop**. White latex only seen when young parts are cut. **LEAVES:** Long, oval, dark above, paler below, turning dark red before falling, to 14 cm long, tip pointed, **edge irregularly toothed**, midrib and veins raised below, about 10 pairs side veins; base narrow or rounded to a 1–2 cm stalk. **FLOWERS:** No petals or sepals. Flowers **catkin-like, in spikes** 5–10 cm long, the upper part with tiny male flowers each with yellow stamens; 2–5 rounded female flowers at the base, larger, on longer stalks. **FRUIT:** **2-part red capsules about 1 cm** across, topped with remains of style. The capsule finally opens to set free seeds. Seeds often eaten by insect larvae.

**ECOLOGY:** A tree of secondary scrub, fringing forest and forest edges extending from West Africa to Eritrea and Ethiopia and south to South Africa. In Kenya, in riverine forest, moist or dry forests (in dry forest only near water). Agroclimatic Zones II–IV. Flowers in April–May and seeds mature in July–September in Bungoma.

**USES:** Firewood, charcoal, timber, tool handles, farm implements, medicine, fodder, shade, ornamental.

**PROPAGATION:** Wildings, direct sowing at site.

**SEED:** Collected in capsules, which are cracked to extract seed.

**treatment:** Not necessary.

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

**MANAGEMENT:** Coppicing, pollarding, lopping.

**REMARKS:** The leaves are protein-rich and good for live-stock fodder. It has become scarce in some areas because of incursion of its habitat.

**FURTHER READING:** <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002.

