

***Scutia myrtina***

## Rhamnaceae

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Boni:** Tsina; **Giriama:** Munyahi; **Kamba:** Kitumbuu; **Kikuyu:** Muhurangware, Mulangari; **Kipsigis:** Simbejwet; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Lunani, Lusecha; **Luo:** Migodha, Osiri; **Maasai:** Osanangururi; **Marakwet:** Sumbeyiwa, Tolgokwa; **Sabaot:** Letwa; **Samburu:** Laturudei, Sanunguri; **Sanya:** Boja, Huda huda; **Tugen:** Sumboywa; **Wardei:** Goraa.

**DESCRIPTION:** A spiny often scrambling shrub to 6 m high. Branches scattered and spreading with **recurved thorns** that are normally in pairs, grey with shiny brown tips. **BARK:** Grey, smooth, older bark dark, corky with vertical fissures. **LEAVES:** **Glossy** mid-green above, **usually opposite**, broadly oval, to 6 cm long, tip rounded or with a tiny sharp protrusion. **FLOWERS:** Small, **creamy-green**, bell-shaped, in clusters at the leaf axils. **FRUIT:** Green, later red and turning **purple-black on ripening**, up to 1 cm in diameter, edible when ripe, much eaten by birds.

**ECOLOGY:** Distributed from Kenya and Uganda south to South Africa and Madagascar; India, Sri Lanka and east to Vietnam. Widely distributed in Kenya and common in the dry middle- to high-altitude areas in bushed grassland and thickets, 0–2,700 m. Confined to riverine vegetation and near pools, swamps as well as near the sea in the lower dry altitudes. Common on clay soils, coral soil and on red and black-cotton soil, often on termite hills. Agroclimatic Zones II–IV. Fruits in January–April at the coast; flowers in June in Narok and fruits in February and July in Kajiado and Kitui.

**USES:** Food (fruit), medicine (roots, leaves), fodder, shade.

**PROPAGATION:** Wildings. Seeds germinate well, but are difficult to collect since the fruits are eaten by birds and squirrels. Root suckers are also produced.

**FURTHER READING:** Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002.

