

***Sideroxylon inerme* (*S. diospyroides*)**

Sapotaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Giriama:** Mutsani; **Sanya:** Garbithi hadaa;
Swahili: Mkokobara, Mtunda, Mtunda wa ng'ombe.

DESCRIPTION: A dense, dark green leafy shrub or small tree with a single stem but **branching low**, up to 12 m tall. **Stem and branches often twisted.** It has a **spreading crown** with branches that often rest on the ground. **BARK:** Grey, becoming thick and **dark to almost black and fissured**; young branches covered with fine soft grey to rusty hairs. **Milky latex** oozes out if plant is injured. **LEAVES:** Alternate, simple, tending to be **wider towards the tip**, up to 12 cm long and up to 5 cm wide, **shiny dark green above**, paler green below, often with rusty hairs that rub off with age, leaving patches until all the hairs have finally fallen, **tip often notched**; leaf stalk up to 1.5 cm. **FLOWERS:** Greenish to white, up to 4 mm long, solitary or in few- to many-flowered clusters, in the leaf axils or sometimes on older wood, **stalk short**, to 7 mm long. Bisexual, all floral parts in 5s. **FRUIT:** Spherical, fleshy, up to 1.5 cm in diameter, short stalked, **solitary or in clusters along the stem**, smooth, **purplish black** when mature, **containing a milky latex**, one seed in each fruit.

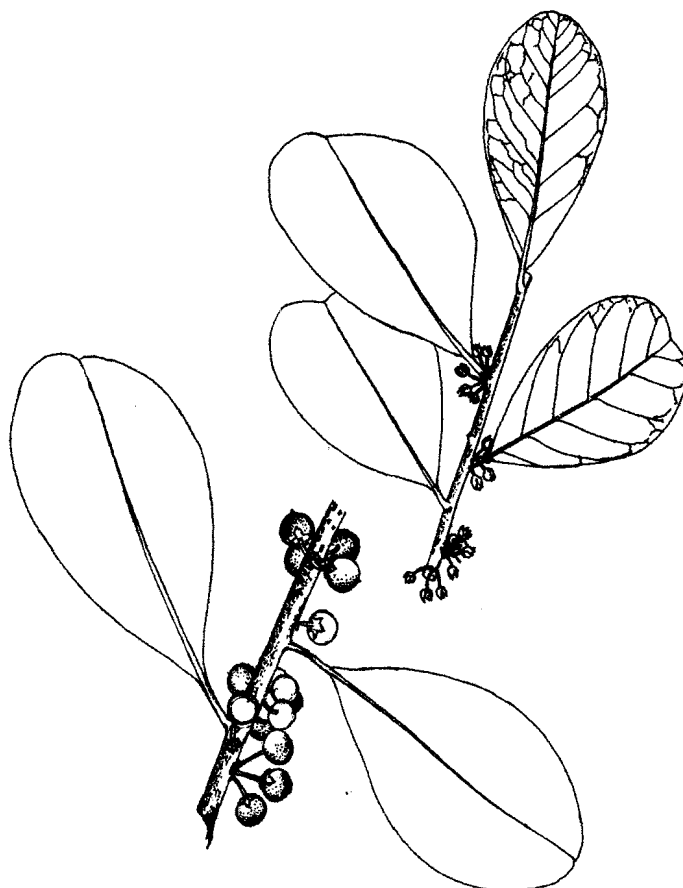
ECOLOGY: Found from Somalia south to Cape Province of South Africa and on the islands of Zanzibar and the Aldabra Islands. Occurs near the high-water mark on the edge of coastal evergreen bushland, in dune scrub, or on the landward side of mangrove, less frequently in coastal bushland; inland found only in riverine thickets along the Kiboko and Tsavo Rivers. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV. Flowers mostly in March; fruits in May–June at the coast, although it may flower up to 3 times a year.

USES: Timber, poles, edible fruit.

PROPAGATION: Wildings, seedlings, cuttings.

REMARKS: The wood of this species is heavy, very hard, strong, finely textured and durable, even in damp conditions. It has been used as general-purpose timber and for building boats, bridges, etc. The fruit is much eaten by wildlife. The tree may reach a great age; some trees in South Africa are believed to be up to 600 years old.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; van Wyk, 1993.



Bark

