

***Stereospermum kunthianum***

Bignoniaceae

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Digo:** Ndondu, Mwagaivu; **Luhya:** Mahorlu; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumutumolo; **Luo:** Pololok, Nyariango; **Swahili:** Mti sumu; **Turkana:** Nyakabur.

**DESCRIPTION:** A deciduous tree, 5–13 m, the trunk waved or spiral, rarely straight, crown rounded. **BARK:** Grey and flaking in round patches to show paler under bark (like *Eucalyptus*). **LEAVES:** Compound, with 4 pairs leaflets plus 1 on a stalk to 7 cm, each leaflet oval-oblong, pointed, to 8 cm, young leaves sometimes toothed and hairy. **FLOWERS:** Fragrant, in large drooping 20–30-cm long heads on the bare tree, pink–lilac–dark pink, the bell-shaped tube to 3 cm long, opening to 5-petal lobes, 4 cm across, lobes marked with red lines inside, 2 long, 2 short stamens inside. **FRUIT:** Very long thin cylindrical capsules, twisted, red-brown, to 60 cm but only 1 cm across. They split to release many winged seeds 2–3 cm long and then remain many months on the tree.

**ECOLOGY:** An attractive flowering tree distributed from Ethiopia south to South Africa and from low to high altitudes. In Kenya, it is a small tree frequently occurring on rocky outcrops, in rocky bushland, wooded grassland; on the coast also in forest margins and secondary bush. Below 300 m at the coast and 900–2,100 m inland. Agroclimatic Zones III.

**USES:** Firewood, charcoal, poles, furniture, tool handles, sticks, medicine (bark, fruit), bee forage, ornamental.

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings, root suckers.

**SEED:** Collect before the capsule splits open; otherwise the seeds will be blown away. About 35,000 seeds per kg.

**treatment:** Not necessary, the germination is fast (in 2 weeks) but often low germination rate.

**storage:** Can be stored for at least 3 months at room temperature.

**MANAGEMENT:** Fast growing; coppicing, pollarding.

**REMARKS:** The fruit capsules, chewed with salt, are used by Ugandans as a cough remedy. The wood is white-yellow

and makes good tool handles and sticks but is liable to borer, termite and fungal attack. Best planted as solitary trees.

**FURTHER READING:** <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Dharani, 2002; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Mbuya et al., 1994; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990; Storrs, 1979; von Maydell, 1990.

