

***Strombosia scheffleri***

Olacaceae

**Indigenous****STANDARD/TRADE NAME:** *Strombosia*.**COMMON NAMES:** **Kamba:** Mutianzunu; **Kikuyu:** Munyenye, Muthiringu; **Meru:** Mutimuiru, Murithi; **Taita:** Msangana.

**DESCRIPTION:** An evergreen tree to 30 m with a clean bole to a dense short or long crown, not spreading but very shady. The trunk may be fluted and there are sometimes small buttresses. Branchlets drooping; lowest branches grow up vertically. **BARK:** Thin and smooth, light brown or yellow-green, flaking in small or large pieces (to 30 x 20 cm) giving a mosaic of several colours. The inner bark may be red. **LEAVES:** Alternate, leathery and large, up to 23 x 10 cm, often smaller, with 5–7 pairs of lateral veins, very prominent below, base broad to rounded with a grooved stalk to 2 cm long. **FLOWERS:** Inconspicuous and small yellow–green–white clusters on short side shoots, all parts in 5s. **FRUIT:** Long, stalked, a rounded to oval fleshy edible berry, 2–3 cm long, black when ripe, a depression at the top has the old style in the middle. A hard fibrous seed lies within.

**ECOLOGY:** An understory forest tree in Sudan and eastern Africa. In Kenya, it is a tree of moist forests, 1,200–2,300 m, where it is sometimes the dominant species. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV.

**USES:** Firewood, charcoal, timber (construction, interior works), furniture, utensils (mortars), shade.

**PROPAGATION:** Wildings, seedlings (sow seed in pots).

**SEED:** The seed is contained inside the fleshy fruit.

**treatment:** The fruits should be depulped immediately after collection by rubbing over a wire mesh under a flowing stream of water. Sand can be added to facilitate the process. Pulp and seed can then be separated by floating in water. Dry the seed after washing. Soak again in cold water for 24 hours before sowing.

**storage:** Seed can be stored for some time if spread out in a cool dry place.

**MANAGEMENT:** Pruning, lopping, pollarding.

**REMARKS:** Mortars made of *Strombosia* have a reputation for being durable. The timber is hard, red and close-grained and takes a high polish. It is not durable in the ground.

**FURTHER READING:** Beentje, 1994; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990.

