Strychnos mitis

Loganiaceae

Indigenous

Common Names: Boran: Karaa; Kikuyu: Mutikani; Kipsigis: Mase; Luhya (Bukusu): Kumukhubwe; Maasai: Olduyesi; Samburu: Itagurmut; Swahili: Mwanga jini ndogo; Tugen: Turukukwa.

Description: An evergreen forest tree to 24 m tall, occasionally more, the trunk usually crooked, with low branches and a spreading crown, trunks appearing twisted (like Eucalyptus). The dense leafy crown resembles that of Cynometra. The base may be thick and fluted but there are no buttresses. BARK: Grey-brown, very thin and smooth, slightly flaking with age, underbark often green. LEAVES: Opposite, stiff, shiny above, long oval 4—11 cm long, tip usually pointed, a short stalk. All Strychnos have 3 veins from the base, but the lateral vein in this species is faint, the pair above are much clearer, about 1 cm from the base. FLOWERS: White-cream, small and hairy, in dense heads, only 1.2 cm, usually terminal, but also beside leaves. FRUIT: Yellow-orange, rounded to oval, 1–2 cm in diameter; eaten by baboons.

Ecology: A forest tree common in tropical rainforest throughout eastern Africa; also in Sudan and Zimbabwe. In Kenya, it occurs in dry or riverine forests up to 2,000 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–III.

Uses: Firewood, charcoal, timber (heavy construction, rail sleepers), poles, shade, ornamental, avenue tree.

PROPAGATION: Regenerates naturally from seed in profuse numbers. Wildings, direct sowing at site, seedlings.

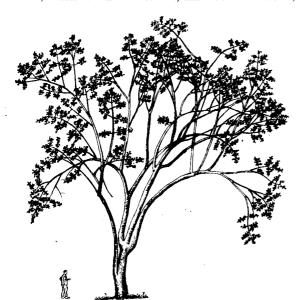
SEED: Fruit are produced all year round. These are collected, seeds extracted and thoroughly dried.

treatment: Soak in water overnight before sowing.

storage: Store in sealed containers in a cool place.

Management: Pollarding and coppicing.

REMARKS: The timber is hard and difficult to work but used for building and heavy construction. Several other *Strychnos* species are useful. One is *S. madagascariensis* (Boni: Mangula; Chonyi: Mkwakwa; Digo: Muhonga, Musikiro, Mkwakwa; Giriama: Mujaje, Majaje (fruit), Mkwakwa; Kamba: Kikolakolania; Kambe: Mkwakwa;



Sanya: Korocha, Mangula; Swahili: Mtonga, Kikwakwa), a much-branched shrub or small tree to 6 m high with pale grey bark and large fruits, to 8 cm across, green with a hard cover, turning orange-yellow on ripening; edible and can be made into juice, but seeds should be discarded. Seeds are not as many as in *S. spinosa*. It is found at the coast and inland to Makueni District in coastal bushland, on rocky hillsides and thickets, 0–700 m. Propagated by seed, good germination. Another related species, *S. innocua*, usually with smaller fruits, 4–7 cm in diameter, has been found only in West Pokot District. The deep yellow ripe fruit is edible.

FURTHER READING: Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Katende et al., 1995; Maundu et al.. 1999 (S. innocua); Mbuya et al., 1994 (S. innocua); Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Ruffo et al., 2002 (S. innocua); Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990 (S. innocua).

