

Strychnos spinosa

Loganiaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Bajun:** Myae; **Boni:** Mangula; **Digo:** Muhonga, Mursapungu; **English:** Elephant orange, Spiny monkey ball; **Giriama:** Mujaje; **Kamba:** Kiae, Kyae (Kitui), Kimee, Mumee (Machakos), Mamee (fruit); **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumukhubwe; **Luo:** Akwalakwala liech; **Mbeere:** Mwange, Mwange wa ndue, Mubage; **Pokomo:** Bungo; **Pokot:** Kukuwol, Kukugho; **Sanya:** Mangula; **Swahili:** Mtonga; **Teso:** Eturukurut.

DESCRIPTION: A semi-deciduous thorny tree, often multi-stemmed, usually 2–5 m but up to 9 m, crown rounded. **BARK:** Grey-brown, rough, with **black-tipped thorns, short and hooked, in pairs**, along the branches. **LEAVES:** **Opposite, oval to round, to 10 cm**, shiny green and leathery, edge wavy, 3–5 veins from the base. **FLOWERS:** Small, cream–green–white, in bunches at the end of branches. **FRUIT:** **Round and woody, green then yellow-brown when ripe, to 12 cm across**, conspicuous and hanging many months on the tree, 10–100 flat seeds lie in **juicy, rather acid but edible flesh**.

ECOLOGY: A semi-evergreen shrub found all over tropical Africa. It grows in a wide variety of dry woodland, savanna forests and riverine fringes. Found in the coastal zone and a few inland areas, e.g. in Mbeere, Kitui, West Pokot and Baringo in bushland and wooded grassland, 0–1,800 m. Mainly in sandy soil. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV. Fruits in August in Kitui and Kwale and in January–February in Lamu and Kilifi. Flowers in April–May and November–December and fruits in May–July and in January–February in Bungoma.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber, furniture, edible ripe fruit (unripe poisonous!), medicine (roots, fruits), fodder, shade, ornamental, musical instrument (dry fruit shell), insect repellent (ground roots mixed with oil).

PROPAGATION: Seedlings. Produces root suckers.

SEED: Seed has a hard coat but germinates well after treatment. It is easy to raise seedlings. About 1,800 seeds per kg.

treatment: Immerse seed in hot water, or burn seed coat.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods.

MANAGEMENT: Coppicing, pruning. Root suckers can be induced or encouraged by pruning or injuring the roots.

REMARKS: Although the fruit is edible, seeds are toxic. The ripe fruits have a sweet–acid taste. Unripe fruits are poisonous. Wood is pale, straight grained and planes well. Like most *Strychnos* spp. it is often left in shambas.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Katende et al., 1995, 1999; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Ruffo et al., 2002; Storrs, 1979; von Maydeil, 1990.

