

***Syzygium cordatum***

Myrtaceae

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Digo:** Muziahi, Mzihae; **English:** Waterberry tree, Waterwood; **Kamba:** Muvuena, Muvueni, Kivuini; **Kikuyu:** Muriru; **Kipsigis:** Lemeyet; **Kisii:** Omosambarao; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumusemwa; **Luhya (Maragoli):** Musioma; **Luhya (Marama):** Tsisirinya; **Luhya (Tachoni):** Omusemwa (plant), Obusemwa (fruit); **Luo:** Mukutan achak; **Maasai:** Oloiragai; **Marakwet:** Reper, Reperwo (plural); **Mbeere:** Muriru, Mukui; **Pokot:** Reper (plural), Reperwo; **Samburu:** Lairakai, Lamulii, Leperei; **Swahili:** Mzambarau, Mzuari, Myamay; **Taita:** Musu.

**DESCRIPTION:** A medium-sized evergreen tree 8–15 m high, sometimes a flowering shrub, the crown compact and rounded from a short thick trunk, sometimes buttressed. **BARK:** Dark brown, rough and fissured, breaking into small squares; **branchlets square, edges winged.** **LEAVES:** Very many near the ends of branches, **clasp**ing the stem in opposite pairs, the **next leaf pair at right angles, leathery, blue-green, oblong to circular, to 8 cm, leaf base heart-shaped** ('cordatum'). **FLOWERS:** Dense, branched **clusters to 10 cm across, pink-white with conspicuous stamens**, abundant nectar. **FRUIT:** Fleshy **oval to 1.5 cm long, purple when ripe**, edible but acid, 1 seed.

**ECOLOGY:** A tree found beside fresh water and in swamps in eastern and Central Africa and south to Natal. Occurs in lowland forests as well as at medium to higher altitudes, always near water, in riverine thickets and forests. In Kenya, e.g. at Chepareria (West Pokot), Saiwa Swamp (Trans Nzoia), on the Thika road and in swamps in Amboseli National Park, in riverine vegetation along permanent streams or in swampy areas, 0–2,500 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–IV. Fruits in April–May in West Pokot; flowers in March–May and fruits in April–July in Bungoma.

**USES:** Firewood, charcoal, timber (construction), furniture, beehives, beams and rafters, boat building, edible fruit, drink, medicine (leaves, bark, roots), fodder, bee forage, shade, ornamental, river-bank stabilization, dye (bark), fish poison (pieces of bark or powdered bark).

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings (sow seed in pots), wildings, direct sowing at site.

**SEED:** 400–450 seeds per kg. Germination is very good and uniform; 90% after 25 days.

**treatment:** Not necessary, but remove the flesh and wash before sowing.

**storage:** Seed cannot be stored (recalcitrant) and should not be dried.

**MANAGEMENT:** Fairly fast growing; pollarding.

**REMARKS:** The edible fruit may be made into a drink. Ripe fruits eaten by birds. The wood is fairly hard and used for construction. Milk gourds can be seasoned by the pleasantly aromatic smoke of the burning wood. *S. cordatum* hybridizes freely with *S. guineense* and the two species are thus not always clearly distinct.

**FURTHER READING:** <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; 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.

