

Terminalia catappa**Combretaceae****Asia, Australia**

COMMON NAMES: **Digo:** Mukungu; **English:** Bastard almond, Indian almond; **Giriama:** Mkungu; **Swahili:** Mkungu.

DESCRIPTION: A tree to 25 m with **clear horizontally layered branches** when young. Mature trees with a wide spreading crown. **BARK:** Grey-brown, rough with age. **LEAVES:** **Very large to 30 x 15 cm, leathery and shiny, in clusters, bright red before falling, wider at the tip, veins very clear.** **FLOWERS:** Inconspicuous **green-white spikes.** **FRUIT:** Hard, to 7 cm, green-red, **rounded and flattened with 2 ridges** but no wings.

ECOLOGY: A conspicuous semi-deciduous tree of coastal areas throughout the warm tropics, including those of eastern Africa. Naturalized at the Kenya coast and also in Voi, Magadi, Kisumu. Its vast root system binds sandy and salty soil, but it prefers well-drained soils. Fruits are spread by fruit bats. Agroclimatic Zones II–III. At the coast, trees flower in April, fruits emerge in June and seed ripen in October–November.

USES: Timber, boat building, food (edible seed kernel), medicine (leaves and fruit), shade, ornamental, soil conservation, soil improvement, dune fixation, tannin (bark, leaves, roots, fruit shell), dye (trunk, roots, fruits), wrapping material (large leaves).

PROPAGATION: Seedlings.

SEED: 150–860 seeds per kg; germination rate 30–70%.

treatment: To extract the seeds, collect the fruit in a heap, spray with water and cover with grass or leaves. After a day or so the outer cover becomes soft and the seeds can be extracted. After extraction the seeds should be soaked overnight in cold water and sown the following day.

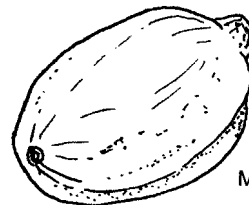
storage: Seed can retain viability for long periods even after floating in water for long distances.

MANAGEMENT: Slow initial growth, later medium to fast growing. Coppices on good sites, pruning.

REMARKS: Fruits float in sea water and the kernel contains an extractable oil. The kernels (rather like almond nuts of

Europe) can be eaten raw or roasted and have an almond taste. The outer shell is rich in tannin. The red timber has been used to build boats. The vast root system binds sand, hence the tree is effective as a sand-dune stabilizer at the coast.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Beentje, 1994; Dharani, 2002; Jensen, 1999; Lötschert and Beese, 1983; Mbuya et al., 1994; National Academy of Sciences, 1980, 1983; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Verheij and Coronel, 1991.



Mature fruit

