

*Uvaria acuminata*

Annonaceae

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Boni:** Tomur, Tumorr; **Digo:** Mumbweni, Mudzala; **Duruma:** Mdzala; **Giriama:** Murori, Virori (fruit); **Kamba:** Mukukuma, Ngukuma (fruit); **Sanya:** Shiyole; **Somali:** Cirmaan booy; **Swahili:** Mwacha, Mgwani, Mganda simba.

**DESCRIPTION:** A liana or shrub, to 5 m, with spreading slender flexible branches. **BARK:** Dark brown, smooth. **LEAVES:** To 8 cm long, widest in the middle or towards the tip, base rounded to slightly heart-shaped, tip usually pointed, sparingly hairy to densely hairy beneath. **FLOWERS:** Pale yellow, solitary or in 2s, positioned at branch tips or on the sides above or opposite leaves. Petals 6 (1.3 cm long); 3 sepals covering flower in bud. **FRUIT:** Split into several rounded or ovoid units (monocarps) that form a cluster of up to 15, each monocarp to 1.6 cm long, rough skinned, greenish brown, yellow when ripe, constricted between the seeds where multiple. Seeds shiny brown, 1–4 per monocarp but usually 1.

**ECOLOGY:** It is found in Kenya, eastern and southern parts of Tanzania, including Pemba and Zanzibar, Mozambique and Madagascar. In Kenya, found in Kitui, but mainly in the coastal region, e.g. Lamu, Malindi, Kilifi, Kwale and Taita-Taveta in bushland, 0–1,400 m. Common in sandy soils, especially red sand. The species is locally common in some areas. Agroclimatic Zones II–III. Flowers in December–January and fruits in May–June at the coast; in July in Kitui.

**USES:** Edible fruits, medicine (roots), twigs for building traditional houses, bows, walking sticks, tool handles, bee forage, live fence, ornamental.

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings, cuttings, wildings.

**REMARKS:** The edible portion of the fruit is small but sweet. It is sucked and the seeds discarded. The branches are used for weaving large baskets and traps. This shrub has potential as a hedge and ornamental plant. The genus *Uvaria* has about 8 species in Kenya. Most of them have sweet edible flesh surrounding the seeds. Besides *U. acuminata*, other important ones are *U. denhardtiana*, *U. kirkii*, *U. leptocladon*, *U. lucida* and *U. scheffleri* (the latter two being treated separately). *U. denhardtiana* (**Bajun:** Kilua, Murukatwa; **Boni:** Halas), is a similar coastal shrub with edible fruits. Leaves are less hairy, often hairless. Monocarps are up to 1.2 cm long and 1–2 seeded with relatively long stalks that may be longer than the monocarps. It is also found in coastal bushland, especially in sand dunes.

**FURTHER READING:** Beentje, 1994; Maundu et al., 1999; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Ruffo et al., 2002.

