

Uvaria lucida

Annonaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Boni:** Halas; **Digo:** Mungweni; **Giriama:** Mudzala, Madzala (fruit), Mudzala dowe; **Sanya:** Shilolekorm; **Swahili:** Mganda simba.

DESCRIPTION: A liana or erect shrub, 1–7 m, branches slender and flexible. **BARK:** Dark brown, smooth. **LEAVES:** To 10 cm long, widest in the middle or towards the tip, base rounded, tip pointed or blunt, hairy beneath, glossy above, stalk rusty hairy and channelled above. **FLOWERS:** Yellow-green, solitary or in 2s or 3s, terminal or on the sides opposite leaves or above them. Petals 6, to 2 cm long. **Calyx cup-like**, splitting into 3 as the flower opens. **FRUIT:** Split into several finger-like rounded or elongate units (monocarps), each to 3 cm long, rusty brown, constricted between the seeds, which are usually 3–6 per 'finger' but may be as many as 12.

ECOLOGY: Distributed from Kenya, through eastern parts of Tanzania to southern Africa. In Kenya, found in the wetter parts of the country, but mainly in the coastal region such as Marafa in Malindi District, Arabuko-Sokoke (Kilifi), Mbololo (Taita-Taveta) and Lamu and Kwale Districts; 0–1,800 m. Grows at forest margins, in riverine forests, *Brachystegia* woodland and coastal bushland. Agroclimatic Zone III.

USES: Edible fruits, medicine (leaves), live fence, twigs for building.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, cuttings, wildings.

REMARKS: The description given here is that of subsp. *lucida*. *U. lucida* subsp. *virens* occurs in southern Africa; its roots are reportedly poisonous.

A closely related species, *U. leptocladon* (**Malakote:** Mosholole; **Orma:** Sholole; **Pokot:** MulkSION; **Somali:** Sholole), is a shrub found in drier forests and bushland from the coast to western Kenya. Leaves are pale and softly hairy beneath to almost hairless in some inland plants. Flowers are small, with petals up to 1.4 cm long. Fruit monocarps are round to ovoid and up to 2 cm long, containing up to 9 seeds each. The species is medicinal. *U. kirkii* (**Swahili:** Mcho, Mchofu, Msofu) is a coastal species found in grassland, riverine vegetation, *Brachystegia* woodland and doum palm (*Hyphaene*) grassland. It is more common in the drier north coast, especially Malindi to Lamu. The species is distributed in coastal areas from Kenya, Tanzania, including Pemba and Zanzibar, to Mozambique. Leaves up to 12 cm long and sparsely hairy beneath. Flowers relatively large with petals up to 4.5 cm long, the largest of all Kenyan *Uvaria* species. Fruit monocarps oblong with a rough warty surface and up to 2.5 cm long with up to 8 seeds. Fruits of this species are also edible. Wood is used for tool handles, and roots are a source of black dye. Flowers provide bee forage. Like many *Uvaria* species, this plant has potential as a hedge and ornamental plant.

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

