

Vangueria infausta (*V. rotundata*, *V. tomentosa*)

Rubiaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Digo:** Mviru; **English:** False medlar, Wild medlar; **Giriama:** Mviru, Muviru, Maviru (fruit); **Kamba:** Mukomoa, Muteleli; **Keiyo:** Kimolwet; **Kipsigis:** Kimolwet, Kimolonik; **Kisii:** Omokomoni; **Luhya:** Shikomoli; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumukhomosi; **Luhya (Maragoli):** Mukhomoli; **Luo:** Anyuka (Homa Bay), Apindi (Siaya); **Maasai:** Olgumi, Engumi etari (Loita); **Mbeere:** Mbiruiru, Mukomora; **Meru:** Mubiru; **Nandi:** Kimolwet; **Pokot:** Komolwo, Komol (plural); **Samburu:** Ikoromosoyoi, Ikoromosien; **Sanya:** Bombo; **Swahili:** Mviru; **Taita:** Mboghombogho; **Tugen:** Komolwet (plant), Komolik (fruit); **Turkana:** Emaler.

DESCRIPTION: A deciduous hairy shrub or shapeless tree to 8 m, with a short trunk and hanging branchlets. **BARK:** Pale grey-brown, peeling in untidy flakes, **branchlets hairy**. **LEAVES:** Dull green, broadly oval, to 30 cm, but generally much smaller, **both surfaces velvety hairy**, base rounded, veins conspicuous below; **midribs, stalks and shoots covered with hairs** that may dry yellow or rust coloured, stipules long between young leaves. **FLOWERS:** Small, **densely hairy**, in crowded, **branched heads** to 3 cm long, petals yellow-green, falling early to leave 5 triangular sepals, less than 2 mm long, on the young green fruit; buds pointed, hairy. **FRUIT:** Rounded, green, **glossy, about 4 cm across**, hanging below the leaves, soft brown edible pulp inside when ripe. The fruit bears a **star-shaped scar** from the remains of the calyx, which helps recognition. Dry fruit brown, grooved like a pumpkin.

ECOLOGY: The species is widely distributed in wooded grassland, often in rocky or sandy places, at low to fairly high altitudes from Ethiopia and Central Africa to South Africa. In Kenya, occurs from the coast to the slopes of Mt Elgon. It is common in Kibwezi, Machakos and around Nairobi. The species occurs in a wide range of habitats, in bushland, especially along streams, dry forests, fringing forest, woodland, grassland with scattered trees and rocky bushland, 0–2,450 m. Does well in open as well as partially shaded areas, especially under acacias. Prefers well-drained soils, but can be found in places that are briefly waterlogged during the rainy season. Agroclimatic Zones III–V. Flowers usually produced just before or during the rainy season in April–May in central and eastern Kenya and in August–October in the western parts.

Uses: **FIREWOOD, POLES (FOR HOUSES), TOOL HANDLES, FARM implements** (digging tools), utensils (stirrers), edible fruit and seed kernel, medicine (leaves, roots), fodder (leaves browsed by goats), shade, ornamental.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings. Produces root suckers.

SEED: About 500 seed per kg. Hard seed coat, hence scarification may enhance germination. Germination is good; takes 3–4 weeks or even longer.

treatment: Not necessary, but soaking in cold water overnight may speed up germination.

storage: Sow immediately after collection.

MANAGEMENT: Coppicing.

REMARKS: A fairly fast-growing fruit tree. Healthy plants may fruit in about 3 years. Fruits much relished. Pulp added to milk or water to make porridge (Maasai). The fruit can also be dried and then stored. Kept in farmlands in many places for its fruits and as a shade tree.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Beentje, 1994; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Ruffo et al., 2002; van Wyk, 1993.

