

Vangueria infausta

Rubiaceae

Indigenous

Common names: Arusha: engumi; **Bara:** babaxchet, barangu, malharimog; Eng: wild medlar; **Fipa:** msanda; **Hehe:** msambalawe; **Kere:** mufitanda; Nyam: msada; **Nyat:** mulade-mujenghuma; Nyir: mkungulusuli; **Fare:** mdaria; **Rangi:** mviru; **Samb:** mvilu, mviu; **Swah:** mviru; **Zinza:** mnyabwita.

Ecology: Widely distributed in wooded grassland, often in rocky or sandy places, at low to fairly high altitudes south to Malawi and South Africa. It is common in the dry areas of Babati district.

Uses: Firewood, poles (houses), tools (digging), handles, food (fruit, seed kernel), medicine (roots).

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 long 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 (see drawing). **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, dull orange-brown, soft brown edible pulp inside when ripe. The fruit bear a **star-shaped scar** from the remains of the calyx, which helps recognition.

Propagation: Seedlings and root suckers.

Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: about 500. Hard seed coat Germination is good but takes a long time even after pre-treatment.

treatment: none (soaking or nicking the seed improves germination very little).

storage: can retain viability up to a year if dried properly.

Management: Coppicing; the tree is light demanding.

Remarks: In some areas the tree is believed to have evil powers, but it can be widely seen in farmlands in many places. Traditional healers use the roots for a variety of illnesses: malaria, pneumonia, etc. This species was previously named *V. rotundata/V. tomentosa*.

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