

Vangueria madagascariensis (*V. acutiloba*)

Rubiaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Boran:** Buriri (Moyale); **English:** Common wild medlar; **Kamba:** Ngomoa (fruit), Mukomoa, Kikomoa; **Kikuyu:** Mubiru, Mbiru (fruit); **Kipsigis:** Kimolonik, Kimolwet; **Kisii:** Omokomoni, Enkomoni (fruit), Chinkomoni (fruit); **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumukomosi kumukhasi; **Luhya (Maragoli):** Mukhomoli; **Luo:** Anyuka, Apindi; **Maasai:** Olgumi; **Marakwet:** Komolwo, Komol (plural); **Mbeere:** Mubiru; **Meru:** Mubiru; **Ogiek:** Mulet; **Pokot:** Komolwo; **Rendille:** Irigormosso; **Samburu:** Lkormosiyoi, Lkoromosien; **Swahili:** Mviru; **Taveta:** Mdaria; **Tugen:** Komolik (fruit), Komolwo (plant).

DESCRIPTION: Usually a multi-stemmed deciduous shrub 4–6 m high, occasionally a tree to 10 m. **BARK:** Pale to dark grey, fairly smooth, becoming scaly when old. **LEAVES:** Clustered at the end of branches, **large, glossy green, broadly oval to 20 cm**, usually smaller, opposite, the margin wavy, veins clear below; older leaves are almost hairless. **Leafy stipules on young shoots.** **FLOWERS:** Small, few in **hairy stalked heads, petals green-yellow**, lobes of tubular corolla about 4 mm, 5 lobes of the tubular calyx less than 2 mm long. **FRUIT:** **Green, rounded, to 4.5 cm across, often in bunches of a few, turning brown and edible when ripe**, containing 4–5 hard seeds. Each seed 1.5 cm long.

ECOLOGY: Widespread in subhumid to semi-arid parts of Africa from West through Central to eastern Africa and south to South Africa. In Kenya, widely distributed in bushland, at forest margins, in riverine vegetation and areas with high groundwater, 0–2,400 m. Sometimes on rocky outcrops and termite mounds. Cultivated for its fruit in many tropical regions. Agroclimatic Zones II–V. Fruits in April–May in Kitui, Kiambu and Narok, and in August–September in Baringo, Kiambu and West Pokot.

USES: Firewood, rafters and withies (twigs) for construction, poles, tool handles, carvings, edible fruit, medicine (roots and bark), bee forage, shade, ornamental, spring traps.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings.

SEED: Hard seed coat. About 500–600 seeds per kg. The ripe fruit is persistent and should be picked directly from the tree. Seeds germinate well but sporadically over a period of up to 6 weeks.

treatment: Not necessary, but soaking in cold water may hasten germination.

storage: Sow immediately after collection.

MANAGEMENT: Coppicing; weed young trees.

REMARKS: Trees are left when land is cleared for cultivation as the fruits have commercial value. This is a popular fruit, but the skin is tough. It is removed and the pulp-covered seeds sucked. The pulp has a sweet–acid taste. Seeds are discarded. Fruits eaten by elephants.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Katende et al., 1995, 1999; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Ruffo et al., 2002; Verheij and Coronel, 1991.

