

Vitex doniana

Verbenaceae

Indigenous

Standard/Trade name: Black plum, Vitex.

COMMON NAMES: **Chonyi:** Fudu (fruit); **English:** Black plum; **Kambe:** Fudu (fruit); **Kikuyu:** Muhuru; **Kipsigis:** Mulkelwet; **Kisii:** Mutahuru; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumufutu, Chifutu (fruit); **Luhya:** Muholu, Kumufutu, Omufutu; **Luhya (Tachoni):** Chifutu (fruit), Omufutu, Yifutu (fruit); **Luo:** Oyuelo, Jwelu, Kalemba; **Mbeere:** Muburu; **Pokot:** Tirkirwa; **Sabaot:** Bulgelwa, Pulgelwet; **Swahili:** Mfudu; **Teso:** Ewelo, Ekarukwei.

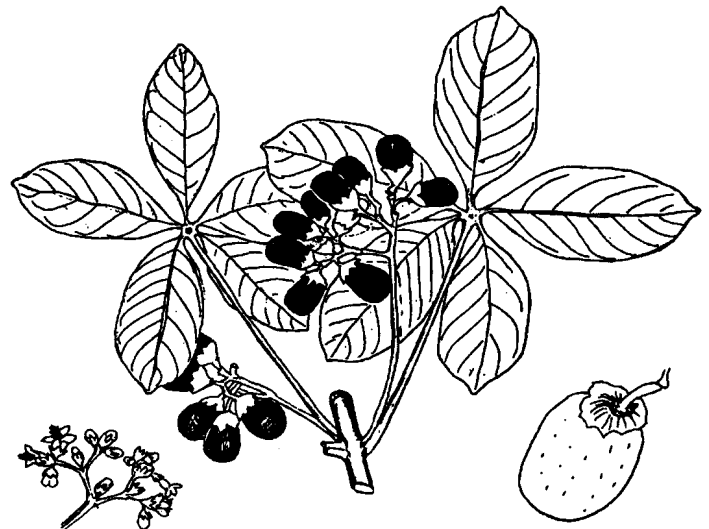
DESCRIPTION: A semi-deciduous tree to 14 m with a **heavy rounded crown** and a clear bole. **BARK:** Pale brown or grey-white, with long fissures and scales. **LEAVES:** Opposite and compound, digitate (like fingers), **leathery, hairless** and shiny, each leaflet widest towards the tip and stalked; terminal leaflet to 15 cm long, tip rounded or sharp, lower leaflets smaller. **FLOWERS:** Fragrant, in long-stalked bunches to 9 cm, **cream to white with one hairy mauve lobe**; the calyx enlarging to a hairy cup around the fruit. **FRUIT:** **Oblong to 3 cm**, green, marked with white dots, **black when ripe**, edible starchy black pulp around a single hard stone. Often dispersed by monkeys and baboons.

ECOLOGY: A semi-deciduous tree found in the more humid areas of tropical Africa, including the Comoro Islands, Sudan and Ethiopia, and widespread in eastern Africa south to South Africa. In Kenya, found mainly in the western parts of the country but also in central Kenya and on the south coast, where it is rare. A tree of wooded grassland, coastal woodlands and forest edges, mostly 1,200–1,950 m. Occurs on a variety of soils, but usually on alluvial ones. Agroclimatic Zones I–III. Fruits in July–August and in December–February in Bungoma.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber, poles, carvings, edible fruit, medicine (fruits, young leaves, roots), fodder (leaves, fruits, seed), bee forage, shade, mulch, boundary marking, dye.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, direct sowing at site, wildings, root suckers.

SEED: 1,000–1,100 stones per kg. Each stone has 1–4 seeds (multi-germ).



treatment: Remove fleshy part of the fruit and immerse stone in warm but not hot water, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours. Without treatment, seeds germinate after a long time.

storage: Sow fresh seed for best germination.

MANAGEMENT: Medium growth rate; pruning. Several seedlings may germinate from one stone. Can be separated and pricked out.

REMARKS: The ripe black fruit is eaten raw and has a sweet taste. The timber is yellowish white with an even grain, easy to work and fairly durable. Fruits are among the best of all the edible *Vitex* species and are often sold. Cultivation of the tree should be encouraged.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Katende et al., 1995, 1999; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Ruffo et al., 2002; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990; Storrs, 1979; von Maydell, 1990.

