

Xylopia parviflora

Annonaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: Digo: Mchiza tsaka; Giriama: Mbarawa, Mukuna mbawa; Sanya: Muki barawa.

DESCRIPTION: A tree up to 24 m, often with a slightly buttressed trunk. **BARK:** Smooth, grey. **LEAVES:** Widest in the middle, narrow, with evenly distributed hairs on the leaf. **FLOWERS:** Yellow-green, borne on sides of branches, singly or in a cluster of few. Sepals 3, petals in 2 whorls of 3 each. **FRUIT:** Divided into several units (**monocarps**), each red or green and cylindrical, to 4 cm, often shorter.

ECOLOGY: Found from Sierra Leone in West Africa, through Central Africa to Sudan and Kenya and south to Angola and South Africa. Mainly a dry evergreen or semi-deciduous forest species growing on coral rag and sandy soils in coastal Kenya; 0–250 m. Agroclimatic Zones III–IV.

USES: Firewood, timber, poles (house construction), medicine (leaves and roots).

PROPAGATION: Seedlings. Produces root suckers.

REMARKS: Caterpillars feed on the leaves. Like many other related species in this family, the fruit develops into a cluster of free, often many-seeded, pod-like arms, 'monocarps'.

The related *X. aethiopica* (Guinea or Ethiopian pepper) is a tree to 30 m high with a clean bole and smooth grey-to-brown bark. Fruit monocarps are up to 6 cm long. The species occurs in West Africa east to Ethiopia and eastern Africa but is rare in Kenya. In West Africa it is an important source of medicine and is often protected. It is said to have antimalarial activity.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002.

