

Brachylaena huillensis* (*B. hutchinsii*)*Asteraceae (Compositae)****Indigenous**

STANDARD/TRADE NAME: Muhuhu, Muhugu.

COMMON NAMES: **Boni:** Avud, Abozi; **Digo:** Muhuhu; **Giriama:** Muhuhu; **Kamba:** Muu, Muuku, Muvumba; **Kikuyu:** Muhugu; **Nandi:** Diamagaldad; **Sanya:** Watho, Mshenzi; **Swahili:** Mkarambati, Muhuhu; **Taita:** Kipungupungu.

DESCRIPTION: An evergreen tree, usually 8–15 m, with steeply ascending branches forming a narrow crown, foliage grey-green. **BARK:** Grey-brown, peeling vertically, fibrous. **LEAVES:** Distinctive spear-shaped, to 10 cm, larger in young plants, sharply tipped, in upright bunches, shoots with cream hairs, mature leaves **white hairy below but shiny above**, edge usually without sharp teeth in older plants; young plants often have larger leaves with few to many sharp teeth at the edges. **FLOWERS:** Male and female on different trees, small and white in furry clusters. **FRUIT:** Tiny hairy seeds, falling to look like white fluff on the ground.

ECOLOGY: Found in southern and eastern Africa. In Kenya, both in coastal forests such as Arabuko-Sokoke and Jilore Forests and in dry highland forests, particularly in central Kenya, Nyeri, Nairobi National Park, Ngong and Karura Forests, 0–1,800 m. Often prominent above the forest canopy. Prefers medium to high rainfall.

Agroclimatic Zones II and III. Flowers twice a year: March–May and October–January in central Kenya and November–April at the coast. Seed development is very rapid after flowering.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber, flooring, poles, posts, carvings, ornamental, essential oil (distilled from wood).

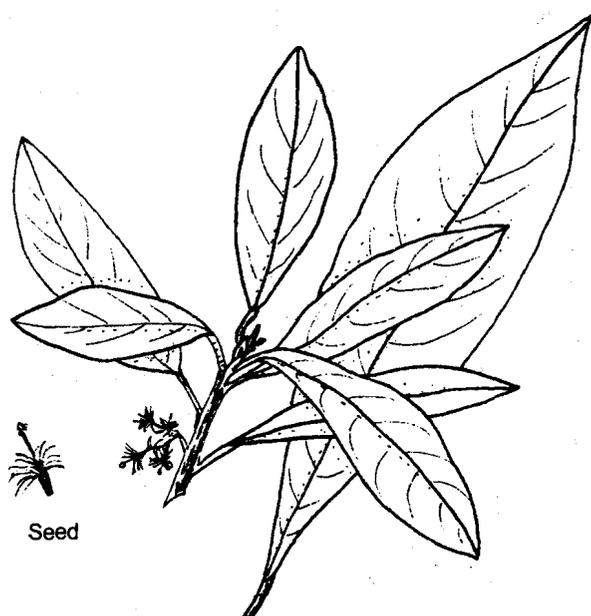
PROPAGATION: Seedlings, wildings.

SEED: Seeds are difficult to collect because they are small; 330,000–500,000 seeds per kg. Germination is poor, 2–10%. **treatment:** Not necessary, but mix seed with moist sand before sowing; otherwise they are easily blown away by the wind. **storage:** Seed does not store well.

MANAGEMENT: Growth rate is medium. Does well when growing with other trees but very poorly in the open.

REMARKS: Wood light but strong, durable and termite resistant. Value 2nd only to *Dalbergia melanoxylon* in the wood-carving industry. Carves easily and polishes well with a good finish. A valuable tree much liked by wood carvers but now mainly confined to protected areas where poaching is a menace. Mature trees are becoming very scarce in most forests.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Albrecht, 1993; Beentje, 1994; Dharani, 2002; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002.



Seed

