

Euphorbia candelabrum

Euphorbiaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Boni:** Baraidi; **Boran:** Adama; **Digo:** Ganga; **Gabra:** Adama; **Giriama:** Kithongothongo; **Kamba:** Kyaa, Kithu; **Kikuyu:** Kithuri; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumutua; **Luo:** Bondo; **Maasai:** Olpong'oi; **Pokot:** Kresua; **Sanya:** Rorogithi.

DESCRIPTION: A tree up to 15 m, the trunk thick, to 3 m, where the lower branches have fallen away. Erect branches have 3–5 spiny ribs or wings, and branches go on dividing to make a large round crown. The green-grey stems have many narrow 'waists' and have taken over the leaf function to make food. **LEAVES:** Mature plants have no true leaves, just scales. Seedlings have leaves. **FLOWERS:** Small, green-yellow and fleshy in groups of 4–6 next to the paired spines. **FRUIT:** Green-red pea-sized capsules, seeds spotted with dirty white.

ECOLOGY: A characteristic tree in much of dryland Africa from Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia south to Malawi and Zambia. In Kenya, it grows in both dry deciduous and evergreen woodlands, often on termite mounds, rocky hillsides and in thickets, 1,100–2,200 m. Tolerates sandy soil, clay soil and coral soil. Agroclimatic Zones IV–V. Flowers in November in western Kenya and Nyanza.

USES: Firewood, timber (roofing, doors), beehives, utensils (mortar), furniture, carvings, musical instruments, bee forage, glue (sap—but see 'remarks', below), live fence, shade, ceremonial, medicine, veterinary medicine, dry branches used to provide light (they burn for a long time).

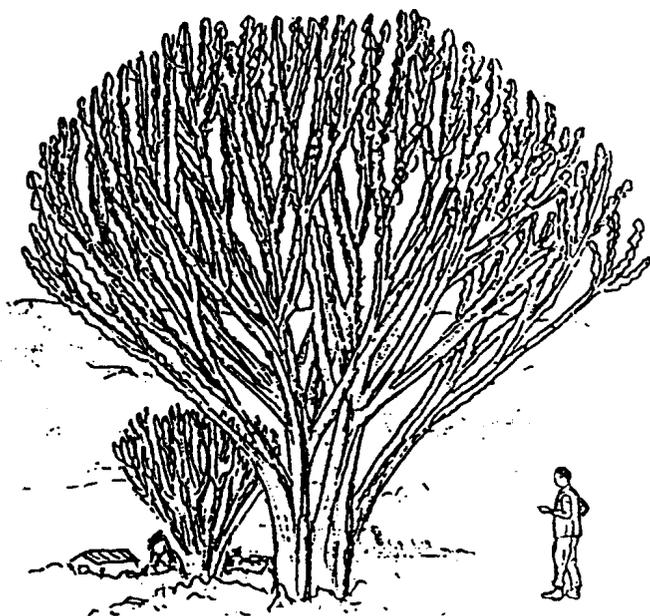
PROPAGATION: Easy to propagate by cuttings. Wildings often germinate where fruit drops.

SEED: Seeds are contained in a capsule with 3 chambers. The capsule splits open noisily and scatters the seeds, which germinate readily under mature trees or in thickets.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: No need to store.

MANAGEMENT: Fast growing. When grown as a hedge, the plant is best when still small. Trees should not be left to become overgrown.



REMARKS: All parts of the plant produce copious milky latex which is poisonous. The milk is harmful to the eyes and may even cause blindness. Elephants eat the tree but they fell it first and leave it for a month or 2 before they eat it. When dry, the light durable wood has many local uses, including firewood and roofing. It is recommended for live fences and is easily grown from cuttings in semi-arid areas. The honey produced when bees forage on this tree is said to be irritating and burning to the mouth.

However, the tree is an important source of nectar in dry areas and of shade in some areas. Species of the related genus *Synadenium* are also grown as a hedge. The latex is poisonous and often used to control warts. Some Maasai communities use *S. grantii* to mark burial sites.

FURTHER READING: Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Dharani, 2002; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; ITDG and IIRR, 1996; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Noad and Birnie, 1989.

