

Nuxia congesta**Buddlejaceae****Indigenous**

COMMON NAMES: **Kamba:** Mukalaliki, Muu; **Kikuyu:** Muchorowe, Mwanda; **Luhya:** Lubambo, Mmonyonyo; **Maasai:** Olpiron, Orpiron; **Marakwet:** Chorua; **Nandi:** Chorua; **Kipsigis:** Chorua; **Sabaot:** Chorua, Murosuet; **Tugen:** Keruwa; **Turkana:** Akwanga, Eonochorie; **Taita:** Mgaraso, Mora.

DESCRIPTION: A deciduous shrub or tree to 20 m. The bole is often short, **twisted, and the low branches droop.** Older trunks often bumpy and fluted and younger trees multi-stemmed. **BARK:** Rough, brownish grey, shedding long **fibrous strips** with age. Young **branchlets** clearly **3- or 6-sided** with thick nodes where the leaves grow out. **LEAVES:** Rather leathery, **dull green**, scaly, usually growing out **in 3s**, crowded at the ends of branches, variable in size, shape and texture, hairy or not, oval to rounded, 1–8 cm, **tip rounded or notched**, edge occasionally toothed, a stalk to 2 cm, midrib clear. **FLOWERS:** Fragrant **white-mauve in dense crowded heads**, flat or round-topped at the ends of branches, the 4 petals hairy outside, hardly longer than the **bell-shaped calyx**, which is sticky and attracts bees. The dry flowers persist on the tree. **FRUIT:** The **calyx persists** surrounding **small hairy capsules**, which split to set free many seeds.

ECOLOGY: A tree of the upper limits of afro-montane forest and also a shrubby tree of the lower-storey vegetation, normally at forest edges and in drier evergreen highland forest. It grows from Sierra Leone to Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and eastern Africa and as far south as South Africa. In Kenya, it is found in montane forest, in the bamboo zone and on hilltops above the forest margin, 1,550–2,850 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–III.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, medicine (leaves and bark), bee forage, live fence, firesticks.

PROPAGATION: Wildings, seedlings.

SEED: Collect mature capsules and thresh out seed.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Can be stored for some time in a dry and cool place.

MANAGEMENT: Coppicing.

REMARKS: A good bee-forage tree. Wood is used for construction.

A related species, *N. floribunda* (**Taita:** Mora, Mwarigaso), is a tree to 25 m found on Taita and Ngulia Hills. It is similar to *N. congesta* but can be distinguished by the usually longer leaf stalk in *N. floribunda* (up to 5.5 cm) and the corolla lobes that are hairless outside. The species is also distributed further south to South Africa where it is occasionally planted as an ornamental. Both these species have leaves occurring in 3s or 4s. *Nuxia oppositifolia* (**Samburu:** Loberondo; **Taita:** Mora) can be distinguished by its leaves, which are opposite or nearly so. It is less common than *N. congesta* and is mainly found in riverine vegetation, particularly in mountain areas. The wood of all the 3 species is used in construction and as firewood. In a recent revision, the genus *Nuxia*, with slightly more than a dozen species distributed in Africa, the Arabian peninsula and the

Indian Ocean islands, has been put under the new family Buddlejaceae, which has been created from Loganiaceae.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990.

