

# A fencing alternative to Kei-apple: *Dovyalis abyssinica*

By FRANCIS GACHATHI



*Dovyalis abyssinica*, fruits. Photo: Francis Gachathi

*Dovyalis abyssinica*, the shrub. Photos Francis Gachathi

**D***ovyalis abyssinica* is a shrub with many branches and grey dotted bark and sharp thorns. It has smooth shiny leaves with reddish stalk and veins. Its flowers are yellowish green in small clusters. The fruit is a round berry about 2 cm across with persistent calyx lobes, green at first, turning orange yellow when ripe. It has edible sweet-sour flesh used to make jelly and to make porridge sour.

Roots have medicinal uses and are usually used in meat soup. It is closely related to Kei-apple, *Dovyalis caffra* and has potential as indigenous hedge plant. Flowers attract swarms of bees for nectar, resulting in high quality honey. It is widespread in highland forest areas, common from 1800-2500 m. The place known as Gikambura, in Kikuyu sub-county, is named after this shrub. It is propagated through seed.

Local names for *Dovyalis abyssinica*

include: Boran: **Kurrawa**; Kamba: **Mukambua**; Kikuyu: **Mukambura**; Kipsigis: **Mwokiot**; Kisii: **Omokorogoinwa**; Luo: **Akudho**; Maasai: **Olmorogi**; Marakwet: **Babchebilit**; Mbeere: **Muraga**; Meru: **Muro**; Nandi: **Nakuk**; Pokot: **Karaturwa**; Samburu: **Imoroo**; Taita: **Bbuche**.

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