

LOCAL NAMES

English (river acacia); Somali (burra,bura); Swahili (mgunga)

BOTANIC DESCRIPTION

Acacia elatior is a tall, evergreen, riverine tree, 7-40 m tall; crown rounded or flattish; bark brown to almost black, deeply fissured; stipular spines of 2 kinds in pairs at the nodes - shorter, 7 mm, brown, sometimes, curved spines, alternating with longer spines, which may reach 9 cm and are straight, white, with a swollen base; the larger spines are sometimes inflated to about 6 (max. 15) mm across; trunk is large, and young twigs are reddish-brown.

Leaves with 5-13 pairs of pinnae; leaflets in (min. 7) 13-25 pairs, 1.2-4 x 0.5-1.4 mm, small and narrow, glabrous or ciliate; petiole 3-10 mm; petiole and rachis glands absent.

Flowers in round heads, greenish-white or white to very pale yellow; involucre small, about 1/3 along length of peduncle.

Fruits are brown to purplish-brown pods, straight or slightly falcate, narrowly oblong, 3.5-12 x 1.2-1.8 cm, tapering at the tip, papery texture, dehiscent; seeds olive-brown, subcircular, 6-7 mm in diameter, thin, flattened.

In Kenya, two subspecies are recognized namely subs. elatior and subs. turkanae

The generic name 'acacia' comes from the Greek word 'akis', meaning a point or a barb.

BIOLOGY

A. elatior is a hermaphroditic species.

ECOLOGY

A. elatior occurs along rivers and lakes, near drainage lines or on dry beds of arid and semi-arid regions. In Kenya, it is mainly restricted to the Galana and Tana rivers in the east and Kerio River, Lodwar and the vicinity of L. Turkana in the west.

BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS

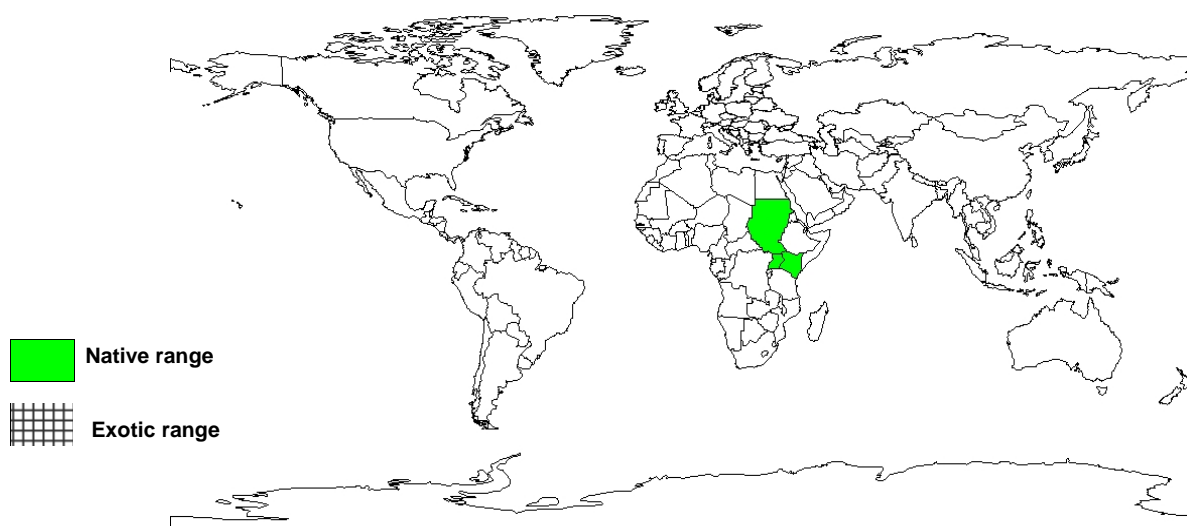
Altitude: 180-1100 m

Mean annual rainfall: 500-1200 m

DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION

Native: Kenya, Sudan, Uganda

Exotic:



The map above shows countries where the species has been planted. It does neither suggest that the species can be planted in every ecological zone within that country, nor that the species can not be planted in other countries than those depicted. Since some tree species are invasive, you need to follow biosafety procedures that apply to your planting site.

PRODUCTS

Fodder: Pods and young shoots are browsed by livestock.

Fuel: *A. elatior* wood produces good firewood and charcoal.

Timber: The Turkana of Kenya use the wood to make drinking vessels.

Medicine: In Kenya a bark decoction is used to treat diarrhoea and gonorrhoea and as a remedy for coughs.

SERVICES

Erosion control: The trees may be planted to stabilize river banks.

Shade or shelter: The drooping branches and feathery leaves of *A. elatior* provide good shade.

Boundary or barrier or support: The tree provides suitable fencing for livestock enclosures; used by the Maasai of Kenya.

TREE MANAGEMENT

Trees grow fast if planted in riverbeds but are slow elsewhere.

GERMPLASM MANAGEMENT

Seed storage behaviour is orthodox.

FURTHER READNG

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SUGGESTED CITATION

Orwa C, A Mutua, Kindt R, Jamnadass R, S Anthony. 2009 Agroforestry Database: a tree reference and selection guide version 4.0 (<http://www.worldagroforestry.org/sites/treedbs/treedatabases.asp>)