

LOCAL NAMES

Somali (dibirkh,dabarrik); Swahili (mwemaya-nguzo,mchongoma)

BOTANIC DESCRIPTION

Commiphora edulis is a small tree 2-10 m tall; bark smooth, pale grey; slash dull red or layered and orange, rather rough; exudate faintly scented, scanty but sometimes plenty; young stems densely pubescent, fluted, 3-4 mm in diameter.

Leaves densely pubescent beneath, up to 22 cm long, 3-11 foliolate; leaflets up to 7 cm long, 3 cm wide on petiolules under 1.5 mm long.

Inflorescence densely pubescent, flowers greenish yellow, fragrant, appearing just before or with young leaves. Male inflorescence spiciform with clusters of cymes on an axis up to 15 cm long including a peduncle up to 35 mm long; bracts linear-lanceolate, up to 4 mm; pedicels up to 3 mm long; receptacle cup-shaped; calyx densely pubescent, divided halfway into acute ovate lobes; petals oblong, glabrous, 4-5 mm long. Female inflorescence much shorter, under 25 mm long.

Fruit elliptic-ovoid, pubescent, 4-seeded.

Three subspecies; *edulis*, *holosericea* and *boiviniana* are recognized in the Flora of Tropical East Africa, the specific epithet *edulis* is in reference to its edible fruits.

ECOLOGY

C. edulis is a variable plant commonly occurring in Acacia-Commiphora bushland (deciduous bushland).

BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS

Altitude: 450-1 500 m

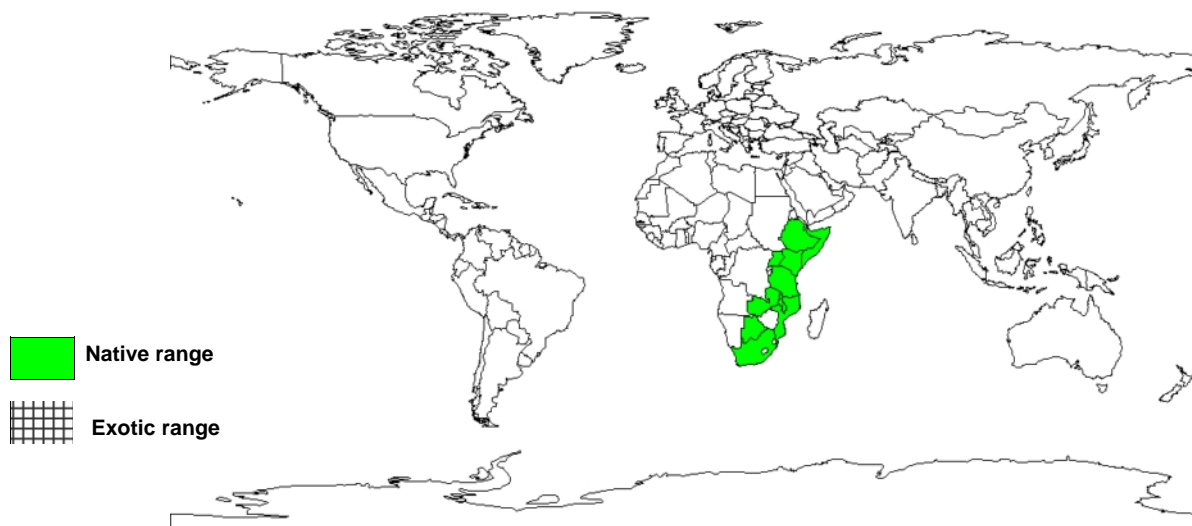
Mean annual rainfall: 350-900 mm

Soil type: Normally found on rocky soil.

DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION

Native: Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia

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

Food: Fruits of subsp. holosericea are edible.

Fodder: Foliage browsed by goats.

Fuel: *C. edulis* is a good source of firewood.

Gum or resin: Exudate from stem cuts is fairly scented, sparse or sometimes copious and milky. Sap used as glue for attaching feathers on to arrows.

Medicine: Bark infusion used to treat malaria. The roots, leaves and stem are used as remedy for stomach ache, menstrual problems and illnesses caused by spirits.

SERVICES

Erosion control: The tree protects surrounding soil from erosion.

Shade or shelter: The tree offers shade.

Soil improver: Leaf litter from this deciduous tree enhances soil fertility.

Other services: Branches of ssp. boiviniana are used for making fire by friction.

Commiphora edulis

(Klotzsch) Engl.

Burseraceae

FURTHER READNG

Abdi AA. 1999. Quarterly Report. The Taxonomy and the Ethnobotany of Burseraceae in Tropical Eastern Africa. East African Herbarium, Nairobi.

Gillett JB. 1991. Burseraceae. In: Flora of Tropical East Africa. Balkema, Rotterdam.

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>)