

**Adenium obesum**

Apocynaceae

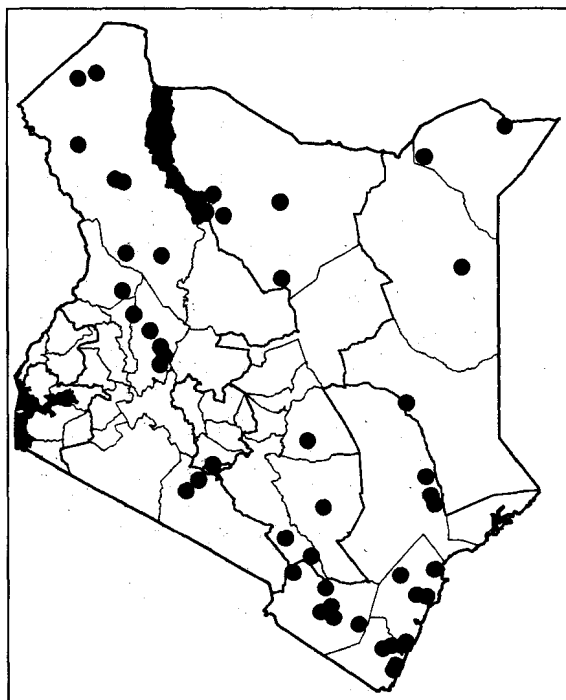
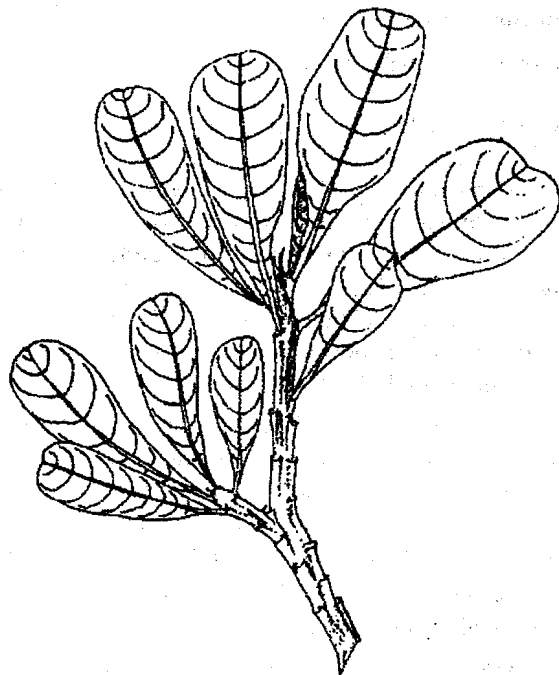
**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** Boran: Obbe; Digo: Mwadiga; Duruma: Mwadiga; English: Desert rose; Gabra: Obbe; Giriama: Mwadiga; Malakote: Tulata; Maasai: Oleteti; Orma: Mukfadjie; Pokomo: Koliya; Samburu: Ipirintai; Somali: Obe, Uba, Feyid, Marud; Swahili: Mwadiga; Taita: Igandaiyu; Turkana: Egales.

**DESCRIPTION:** A succulent deciduous shrub or tree, usually less than 2 m but may occasionally reach 6 m. The stem-base may be swollen and bulbous and up to 1 m across, branches strong and upright. **BARK:** Grey-green, smooth. **LEAVES:** Crowded at the ends of branches, rather fleshy, shiny dark green to blue-green above, dull below, usually about 12 cm long, tip rounded, often notched or with a sharp point, wider towards the tip then narrowed to the base, veins conspicuous. When cut, clear or white latex drips out at once. **FLOWERS:** Very showy, especially on the bare tree, white or pale pink to deep rose, trumpet-shaped, to 5 cm across, the edge darker pink or red, often tightly wavy; 3–5 flowers together, all parts in 5s. **FRUIT:** Long thin pink-green capsules, in pairs to 24 cm long by 2 cm, tapering at both ends, drying brown. They split to release cylindrical seeds 1 cm long. These have tufts of long silky white or golden hairs at each end so seed is blown along the ground (the hairs acting like 2 wheels on the 'axle' of the seed).

**ECOLOGY:** A conspicuous succulent plant found from Arabia to South Africa. Widespread in hot areas of Kenya, in dry bushland and coastal hinterland woodland, often on rocky sites and along runnels that have gravel, sand or loam, 0–1,500 m. It sometimes develops a fleshy taproot. Does not tolerate waterlogging. Agroclimatic Zones III–VI.

**USES:** Medicine (latex and roots), bee forage, ornamental, live fence, arrow poison (sap), fodder, fish poison (pounded roots), rat poison (pounded seeds or roots), veterinary medicine.



## ***Adenium obesum* (cont)**

**PROPAGATION:** Cuttings, wildings, direct sowing at site. It is easy to transplant but seeds germinate only if protected against insects. Seedlings are easily killed by over-watering.

**SEED:** Good germination.

**treatment:** None.

**storage:** Store in sealed containers in a cool place.

**MANAGEMENT:** Slow growing. Soil must be very well drained or the stems will rot.

**REMARKS:** This is a very popular plant in gardens. Planted for its decorative value or for hedges. The sap is used as a component of arrow poison. Latex and roots are used to

treat boils and venereal diseases. All parts may be heavily browsed by game and stock. Caution must be exercised in medical applications since the latex is very poisonous. This plant may easily fall victim to collectors for ornamental purposes and so needs to be protected. The species is very variable along its geographical range, leading some scientists earlier on to consider these variants as separate species. The genus name is derived from its Arabic name *aden*.

**FURTHER READING:** Beentje, 1994; Blundell, 1987; Dharani, 2002; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; ITDG and IIRR, 1996; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Lötschert and Beese, 1983; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; von Maydell, 1990.

