

Indigenous

Ar: *Tarak tarak*

Bl: *Wal wal*

Hd: *Lawloiv*

Eng: *Bitter frankincense*

Km: *Imela*

Nr: *Lawlan*

Tg: *Meker*

TV: *Wal wal*

Ecology: Found in dry Acacia-Commiphora woodland and wooded grassland in north Africa, Arabia and Somalia. In Eritrea, the tree is dominant on steep rocky slopes of the western escarpments, e.g. around Arewai, Tsebab, Jengeren, Meshalit, Shelalo, Augaro, Badime, the Tekeze river, Zaide-kolom and Berakit, 1,100-1,900 m.

Uses: Fodder, live hedge, **incense** (resin).

Description: A deciduous tree to 4-12 m or more, with thick branches tipped with clusters of leaves, the crown rounded. **BARK: Smooth, pale yellow-brown, peeling off in large papery pieces.** A cut looks red-brown and a **fragrant milky resin** drips out. **LEAVES: Large and compound on a stalk to 45 cm, 6-8 pairs leaflets** plus one at the tip, each oval, 4-8 cm, **densely hairy below**, the edge sharp or round-toothed, sometimes double-toothed. **FLOWERS:** Sweet smelling, develop on **loose heads** at the ends of thick branchlets, appearing before the new leaves. The red flower stalk, to 35 cm, bears the **white-pink flowers with 5 petals and 10 yellow stamens.** **FRUIT: Red** capsules about 2 cm long, 3-sided with 3 hard seeds inside.

Propagation: Seedlings, cuttings. The cuttings should be taken shortly before the trees shed their leaves.

Seed:

treatment: No treatment required.

storage:

Management:

Remarks: Harvesting of resin can take place between October and March. The resin-gum droplets are scraped off the bark. This first cutting is thrown away and a second cutting taken weeks later is only of low quality. A third cutting produces quality frankincense. A few tons of frankincense are produced annually in the southern Arabian peninsula alone for rituals and health use. *B. sacra* of Saudi Arabia and Somalia has better-quality frankincense. *B. carteri* provides the resin for the frankincense of commerce, but *B. papyrifera* has a very similar resin and is used as frankincense in Eritrea.

