

Olea europaea subsp. *cuspidata*

(*Olea africana*)

Oleaceae

Indigenous

Ag: *Wiri*

Am: *Weira*

Br: *Ejas*

Eng: *African wild olive, Brown olive*

Gr: *Oira*

Or: *Ejerssa*

Sm: *Wighira*

Tg: *Wogret, Auleh*

Ecology

Widely distributed in dry forest and forest margins, often with *Juniperus procera*, in east Africa and Ethiopia. It reaches southern Africa, also India and China, ranging from tall trees to stunted shrubs. Does best in good forest soil, but hardy and drought resistant once established, even in poor soils. It does best in Moist and Wet Weyna Dega and lower Dega agroclimatic zones in all regions, 1,400-3,100 m.

Uses

Firewood, charcoal, timber (furniture, floors, panelling, walking sticks), poles, posts, milk flavouring (smoking wood), medicine (stem, bark, leaves), bee forage, toothbrushes (twigs).

Description

A handsome evergreen tree, 10–15 m, with a rounded crown and grey-green foliage, trunk often crooked and with characteristic pockets. BARK: Rough dark brown, white branchlets, dotted with breathing pores. LEAVES: Stiff, narrowly oval, sharply pointed in opposite pairs, underside pale

to white, midrib prominent, to 8 cm, stalk very short. FLOWERS: Small, white, in branched heads to 5 cm. FRUIT: Oval, fleshy to 1 cm, purple and bitter-sweet when ripe but edible. Seed about 1 cm long.

Propagation

Wildings, seedlings (difficult to raise).

Seed

The species is a poor seeder. Low germination rate. About 8,000 seed per kg. The collection should be done immediately after the fruit turns to purplish-black because of the competition by birds. After collection, spread out in a thin layer for 2–3 days to ripen. Pulp should be separated from seed by rubbing and cleaning in running water, then dry seed for storage or sow immediately. It is also possible to collect de-pulped seeds from the ground.

Treatment: Not necessary for fresh seed. Soak old seed in water for 48 hours. Germination is slow (45 – 90 days). Poor germination.

Storage: Seed can be stored for about two months.

Management

Slow growing.

Remarks

The species used to be known by its synonym *Olea africana*. Fruits do not produce olive oil. The wood produces a fierce heat on burning. Olive poles are very durable in the ground.

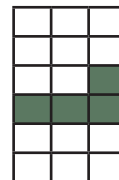




Photo: Patrick Maundu

