Terminalia prunioides

Lawson

Combretaceae

LOCAL NAMES
Afrikaans (sterkbos); English (purple pod terminalia); Somali (hareri girachi,hareri); Swahili (mwangati-punda,mwangati,mwalambe)

Leaves (Bart Wursten)

BOTANIC DESCRIPTION
Terminalia prunioides is a small, deciduous tree (min. 2.5) 4.6-15 m high with a girth of 1.5 m. It may be single or multistemmed, with bark that is light grey, ribbed longitudinally (sometimes deeply); bark on the twigs strips off in small lengths. Long, smooth, arching wands of branches spread outwards and downwards. The short, rigid, usually purplish twigs grow sharply outwards and at right angles to the branches, with the leaves and flowers crowded at their tips. The silhouette of the tree is thus spiky. Spines are often present on the long branches.

Leaves are small, 1.3-7.5 cm long and up to 3 cm broad; oval or egg-shaped, commonly widest in the upper half and tapered to the base; dark green above and lighter below; pubescent when young, later glabrous; base cuneate or attenuate; margin entire; apex round, notched or pointed; petiole almost obscured by the decurrent leaf base. Leaves shed irregularly.

Flowers are starry, small, white or cream, without petals but with a puff of conspicuous yellow stamens; widely spaced in slender, axillary spikes 4-8 cm long, at the end of short branchlets. The smell is strong and unpleasant. Each inflorescence contains bisexual and male flowers, male flowers towards the apex, bisexual flowers towards the base.

Fruits are 3.5-6.5 cm long, 2-3 cm wide; oval or oblong, tips notched; seed in the thickened centre surrounded by a tough, flat wing, purple or deep red when mature; seeds 2.5 x 2 cm, 2-winged, light red to red-purple; endocarp hard and woody, 1-seeded.

The generic name comes from the Latin ‘terminalis’ (‘ending’), and refers to the habit of the leaves, which are crowded at the ends of the shoots. The specific name, ‘prunioides’, is derived from the Latin ‘prunus’ meaning ‘plum’, and the Greek ‘oides’ meaning ‘resembling’, because of the plum-red colour of the fruits.

BIOLOGY
Trees flower form spring to summer in South Africa, while in Kenya, trees flower in years with normal climatic conditions from March to June. After pollination by insects, fruit development takes about 5-6 months. Brown-headed parrots eat the fruits, and probably disperse the seeds.

ECOLOGY
T. prunioides occurs in frost-free and often sandy areas and on stony slopes, often associated with mopane and sometimes with acacias or Combretum apiculatum of the arid and semi-arid zones. It also occurs in coastal bushlands and riverine thickets and on alluvial plains and saline areas. In Kenya, the species grows at the coast and the northern provinces as well as around Kibwezi and Kitui.

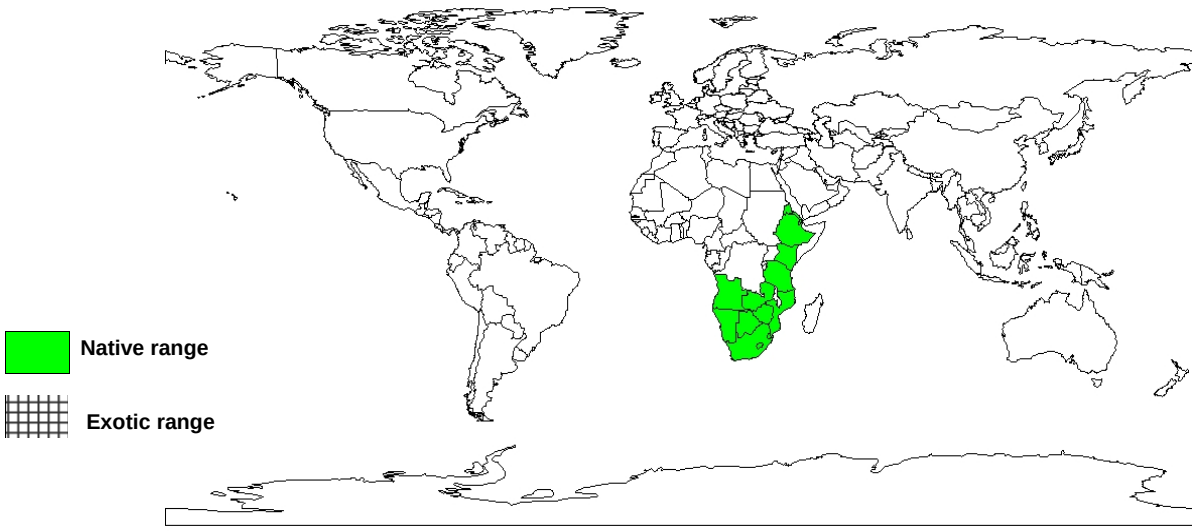
BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS
Altitude: 30-1 400 m, Mean annual rainfall: 450-900 mm

Soil type: Grows on sandy saline soils and deep alluvial soils of low altitude rivers.

DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION

Native: Angola, Botswana, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe

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: The tree exudes edible gum.

Fodder: Fruits are eaten by livestock.

Fuel: Provides good firewood and makes excellent charcoal.

Timber: The wood is yellow, hard, heavy, tough, durable even in salty water, resistant to borers; it is used for tool handles, fence posts, house building, dhow keels and wagon axles.

Medicine: The Somali use a decoction to relieve postnatal abdominal pains.

SERVICES
Soil improver: Leaves are used as green manure.

GERMPLASM MANAGEMENT
Seed storage behaviour is orthodox, and viability can be maintained for at least 1 year in hermetic storage at 3 deg. C with 10-12% mc. On average there are about 8 200 seeds/kg.

PESTS AND DISEASES
Elephants and giraffe eat the leaves and shoot of the tree, and elephant also eat the bark.

FURTHER READNG

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SUGGESTED CITATION

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