

Indigenous

Ar: Hashab

Bl: Shebeta

Eng Gum arabic

Hd: Delaw

Km: Gomera

Nr: Mari, Meghere

Tg: Tsaeda kenteb

Tr: Teshab

- Ecology:** An African Acacia common in arid and semi-arid zones. In Eritrea, it is widespread in dry scrub and wooded grassland in the southern, south-western and western lowlands, e.g. in Hazemo plains and around Molki, Shambuko, Omhajer, Keren and Halibmentel, 500-1,650 m. It tolerates high daily temperatures and a long dry season but prefers moist and well-drained soils.
- Uses:** **Firewood, charcoal**, posts, poles, tools, handles, food (seed), medicine (roots), fodder (pods, leaves), soil conservation, soil improvement, **gum**, dye (seeds).
- Description:** A shrub or tree to 15 m, rounded, many low branches, or tall and thin. **BARK:** Variable, smooth or **peeling yellow and papery** from **red-brown base**. **THORNS:** Prickles **in threes**, the central one hooked downwards, the other two curved up, **brown to black**. **LEAVES:** Compound, usually hairy, only 3-6 pairs pinnae on a stalk to 7 cm, leaflets narrow, very small, grey-green. **FLOWERS:** **Creamy spikes**, one or more, 2-10 cm, fragrant, usually develop before the rainy season. **FRUIT:** Pods, variable, thin and flat, oblong to 14 cm, narrowing at both ends, grey-yellow becoming **papery brown**, veins clear, splitting to release seed.
- Propagation:** Seedlings, direct sowing.
- Seed:** Seed susceptible to beetle attack. Germination rate is good if fresh seeds are used. No. of seeds per kg: 8,000-11,000.
- treatment:** Nick seed or soak them in boiling water for 5 minutes, allow to cool and continue soaking for 24 hours.
- storage:** Seed can be stored in a cool, dry and insect-free place, but germination rate drops with time.
- Management:** Slow growing; needs weeding and protection from animals during early stages; pollarding, lopping, coppicing. Careful "wounding" is required for sustainable gum production, i.e. just deep enough for the gum to exude.
- Remarks:** Can be intercropped (e.g. with sorghum and millet). Gum arabic is traded commercially for use in dying, ink making and medicine. Production is best when the tree grows on poor soils.

