

# Acacia nilotica

Fabaceae

## Indigenous

**Agn:** *Alaro*

**Am:** *Cheba*

**Br:** *Burguge*

**Eng:** *Egyptian thorn, Scented pod acacia*

**Nur:** *Lor*

**Or:** *Burquge, Kasale*

**Sh:** *Aflo*

**Sm:** *Galol, Marab, Tuwer*

**Tg:** *Chea, Gered chea*

## Ecology

Distributed from India to North Africa and south to South Africa and Namibia. Common in arid and semi-arid areas in Africa. It occurs in woodlands and scrub in Gamo Gofa, Kefa, Sidamo, Shoa, Arsi, and Harerge regions in Dry and Moist Kolla and Bereha agroclimatic zones, 600–1,700 m. Subspecies *indica*, though native to India is cultivated in the Afar Plains, Shoa and Harerge regions.

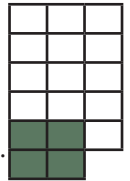
## Uses

Firewood, charcoal, poles, tool handles, carving, medicine (inner bark, roots, leaves), fodder (leaves, pods), bee forage, nitrogen fixation, soil conservation (river banks), windbreak, gum, dye (seeds), live fence, tooth brushes.

## Description

A large shrub or small tree, usually 2–6 m but can reach 14 m, branching from the base to make a rounded crown. **BARK:** On trunk rough brown-black, fissured. Young shoots often red-brown, hairy. **THORNS:** Thin, grey-white to 10 cm, often shorter, may point backwards. **LEAVES:**

Compound, 2–11 pairs of pinnae on leaf stalk 3–6 cm, new growth in the dry season. **FLOWERS:** Fragrant, bright yellow round heads. **FRUIT:** Pods, vary in different subspecies, straight or curved to 17 cm, fleshy and thick, hairy or not, narrowed between seeds or not. Seeds seen as distinct raised bumps in the pod, set free when pods rot on the ground.



## Propagation

Seedlings, direct sowing at site.

## Seed

Beetles attack the seed while still in the pod. Separate by immersion in water; bad seeds float. Germination rate 60–90%; 7,000–11,000 seed per kg.

**Treatment:** Not necessary for fresh seed. Nick stored seed or soak in cold water for 24 hours.

**Storage:** Seed stores well.

## Management

Fast growing on good sites; lopping, pollarding.

## Remarks

Five subspecies are recognized in Ethiopia. The pods of subspecies *indica* are hairy, grey-white, “necklace like” and constricted, making the seeds appear separated along the pod. Young plants do not compete well, so weeding is necessary. Wood is tough and termite resistant. The shrub can form thickets. This is not a preferred forage or bee tree if other browse or acacia blossom is available.



Photo: Patrick Maundu



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