

Balanites aegyptiaca

Balanitaceae

Indigenous

Ag: *Qutsa, Qutta*

Agn: *Toow*

Am: *Bedeno, Jemo, Kudkuda*

Br: *Baddan*

Eng: *Desert date*

Ga: *Domay, Domaye*

Mjr: *Toyun*

Nur: *Tor*

Or: *Bedena, Baddano*

Sm: *Got, Gueza, Gut*

Tg: *Indrur*

Ecology

An important tree found in Asia and all over Africa from arid and semi-arid regions to subhumid savanna. Common in the Dry and Moist Kolla agroclimatic zones of the Rift Valley in Gamo Gofa, and in Sidamo, Tigray, Welo, Shoa, Gojam, Ilubabor, Arsi and upland Harerge regions, 0–1,800 m.

Uses

Firewood, charcoal, timber (furniture), poles, utensils, tool handles, food (fruit), medicine (infusion from roots, emulsion from fruit, heated gum from the wood, fruits), fodder (leaves, young shoots, fruit), shade, mulch, windbreak, gum, ceremonial meetings, fencing (cut branches), oil (fruit), emulsion of fruit kills snails and fish.

Description

A small evergreen tree about 10 m, crown rounded in tangled mass of thorny branches. BARK: Smooth and green, later dark, cracked, corky. THORNS: To 8 cm, soft at first, then woody. LEAVES: Distinctive pairs of grey-green leaflets, ovate. FLOWERS: Fragrant, yellow-

green clusters. FRUIT: Oblong to 5 cm, both ends round, yellow when ripe, a hard pointed seed within surrounded by yellow-brown bittersweet flesh, seed easily separated.



Propagation

Seedlings, direct sowing at site.

Seed

Seed large, 4 x 2 cm. Plant the seed vertically with stem end down for best results. Germinates in 1–4 weeks. About 1,000 seed per kg. Is this clear and true?

Treatment: Soak seed for 24 hours in cold water, then change water and soak for another 24 hours. Alternatively collect seeds that have passed through goats. Can easily be collected where livestock are kept overnight. Germination: 50–70%.

Storage: After removal from the fruit the seed can be stored for up to one year. Store dry and insect-free. As the seed is very susceptible to insect attack, it is best to avoid storage.

Management

A relatively slow-growing tree. Produces root suckers if roots are exposed. Coppicing; protect young seedlings from browsing.

Remarks

An important species for dry areas as it produces fruit even in very dry years. The wood is termite-resistant. Extracts of the fruit and bark can be used to kill the snail hosts of bilharzia. The free-swimming stages of both bilharzia and guinea worm are also killed if the extract is put into the infected water.



Photo: Patrick Maundu

