

Balanites glabra**Balanitaceae****Indigenous**

COMMON NAMES: **Kamba:** Kilului; **Maasai:** Osaragi, Olng'oswa; **Turkana:** Elamach.

DESCRIPTION: A very spiny, evergreen, much-branched dense bush, shrub or small tree 2–4 m (occasionally up to 10 m). **Branches green, drooping, tangled and often leafless.** **BARK:** The bark is smooth and green, later dark, deeply cracked and corky. **THORNS:** **Thick, long, to 10 cm or more.** **LEAVES:** Usually without a conspicuous stalk and usually with 2 almost round **fleshy looking leaflets.** **FLOWERS:** Greenish yellow. **FRUIT:** An ellipsoid drupe to 2.5 cm long, orange with **light green longitudinal lines**, turning pink.

ECOLOGY: Distributed in East Africa, Ethiopia and Somalia. Common in Maasailand both in Kenya and in Tanzania. Very common in Kajiado and Kaputei Plains at 1,400–1,800 m on black soil. The commonest *Balanites* species around Athi River. Agroclimatic Zones IV–VI. Flowers in June–July (Kajiado, Nairobi).

USES: Carvings, edible fruit, fodder (goats eat leaves), shade, live fence, dead fence (thorny branches), soil conservation.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, direct sowing at site.

SEED: Remove fruit pulp and clean seed before sowing.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Sow immediately for good germination. Germination rate up to 80%.

MANAGEMENT: Slow growing.

REMARKS: Can make an excellent live fence but rather slow growing. Ripe fruit pulp is sweet, juicy and eaten (Maasai) but is said to be mildly poisonous, causing a feverish feeling, stomach-ache and even diarrhoea (Maasai).

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Blundell, 1987; Maundu et al., 1999; Noad and Birnie, 1989.

