

Becium grandiflorum

Lamiaceae

Indigenous

Sh: *Tabeb*

Tg: *Tahbeb*

Tr: *Iskee*

Ecology: This aromatic plant is only found in the Ethiopian and Eritrean highlands. It grows on rocky slopes, in montane bushland and eroded pastures. It may form pure stands but is often seen with *Rumex* spp. It is common in the upper midlands and highlands around Asmara, Halai, Segenaiti, Bogos and Rora-habab, 1,700-2,600 m.

Uses: Medicine (ointment from crushed leaves), **fodder** (leaves), bee forage, soil conservation and **traditional use (Meskel fire)**.

Description: A woody shrub 0.4-1.0 m tall. BARK: Pale brown. LEAVES: Pale green, long oval 2-7 cm, the edge slightly toothed. They may be hairy or sticky and have a strong smell when crushed. Base narrowed to a short stalk. FLOWERS: **Short dense flower heads** with up to 16 whorls of flowers; the head later grows to 20 cm long. Each flower 1-2 cm, **pale pink marked with blue-velvet lines**, the stamens hanging out of the corolla tube. Flowers best after rain. FRUIT: 4 nutlets each about 3 mm long.

Propagation: Seedlings.

Seeds:

treatment: Not necessary

storage: Can be stored for a year if kept cool and well dried in air-tight containers.

Management: Fast growing.

Remarks: Crushed and squeezed leaves produce a strong smell and are used as ointment. Branches are used in making *hoye*, a traditional fire which is burnt on Meskel day.

