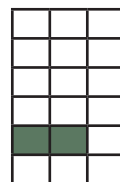


Berchemia discolor

Rhamnaceae



Indigenous

Am: *Jejeba*

Eng: *Wild almond*

Or: *Jejeba*

Sm: *Amor, Hamor, Korguba*

Tg: *Aba*

Ecology

Widespread from Yemen, Somalia and Eritrea to South Africa in semi-arid bushland, wooded grassland as well as riverine vegetation, 0–1,600 m. Tends to be riparian in the more arid areas. In Ethiopia it grows in dry open woodland or along river valleys at lower altitudes in Dry and Moist Kolla agroclimatic zones, commonly in Welo, Shoa, Gamo Gofa, Bale and Harerge, 800–1,900 m.

Uses

Timber (construction, furniture), poles, food (fruit), drink (leaves), medicine (roots), fodder (fruit, leaves), bee forage, shade, ornamental, windbreak, resin, black dye (powdered heartwood, roots).

Description

A semi-deciduous shrub or tall tree to 18 m with erect spreading branches making a heavy rounded crown. BARK: Grey-black, cracking and scaly, corky spots on young greenish branches. LEAVES: Shiny dark green, sticky when young, oval to 11 cm, lateral nerves making a clear pattern. Yellowish green below. FLOWERS: Small yellow-green, stalked, in loose clusters, attracting bees. FRUIT: Oblong, yellow about 2 cm long with 1–2 flat seeds in sweet edible flesh.

Propagation

Seedlings.

Seed

2,300–3,500 seeds per kg. Germination usually good, 80–100%. Germinate readily.

Treatment: Not necessary, but soaking in cold water for 12 hours may enhance germination.

Storage: Stores well at room temperature if kept dry.

Management

Coppicing, lopping, pollarding. Produces root suckers from injured or exposed roots. Fairly fast growing when young.

Remarks

The sapwood is light and yellow, the heartwood yellow-brown and resinous; one of the hardest woods in East and Central Africa. Fruit may be boiled to eat with sorghum; leaves used as a tea. The dye is used by basket makers. Leaves provide fodder for camels and goats.



Photos: Patrick Maundu

