

Boscia coriacea

Capparidaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Boran:** Galgacha hareh; **Daasanach:** Dhuorich; **Gabra:** K'alk'acha; **Ilchamus:** Sericho, Serichoi (plural); **Maasai:** Enkapalases; **Malakote:** Kalaqacha; **Mbeere:** Gitangira, Kikiare, Mukiare, Mutangira, Muthiu; **Orma:** Kalkach; **Pokomo:** Mukukube; **Pokot:** Sorichon, Sorich (plural); **Rendille:** Lyoror, Yoror; **Samburu:** Serichoi; **Somali:** Dagayar, Dakkiyar, Qalanqal; **Swahili:** Mnafisi; **Taita:** Chariso; **Tharaka:** Muthiuthiu; **Tugen:** Sirkwa; **Turkana:** Eedung', Eerdung, Erdung; **Wardei:** Qalanqal.

DESCRIPTION: A twiggly evergreen, usually multi-stemmed shrub or small tree, usually 2–6 m. **LEAVES:** Grey-green, hard and leathery, long to 6 cm, the tip sharply pointed and the edge pale and thick, midrib clear below.

FLOWERS: Dense, fragrant heads, each flower with a mass of yellow-green stamens spreading out from 4 small green sepals. **FRUIT:** Rounded with a fleshy coat, about 1–2 cm across, hairy when young, light green, becoming brown when ripe. The sweet flesh is liked by birds and baboons. **Seeds enclosed in a tough white skin.**

ECOLOGY: An evergreen shrub common in all the drier parts of eastern Africa. Found in deciduous bushland and semi-desert scrub. Common in most arid coastal lowlands of northern and eastern Kenya, mainly in *Acacia-Commiphora* bushland, often in rocky areas, loose red clay or sandy soils with 300–500 mm of annual rainfall, 100–1,500 m. Also tolerates saline soils. Agroclimatic Zone VI. Fruits in February in southern Turkana, March and October around Mtito Andei.

USES: Firewood, furniture, material for temporary structures (branches, stems), utensils (wooden spoons), arrowheads, edible fruit (pulp sucked by humans, eaten by birds, seed must be boiled before eating), medicine (bark, roots), fodder (leaves), bee forage, shade, toothbrushes, cleaning (disinfecting) milk gourds (calabashes), veterinary medicine.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, direct sowing at site.

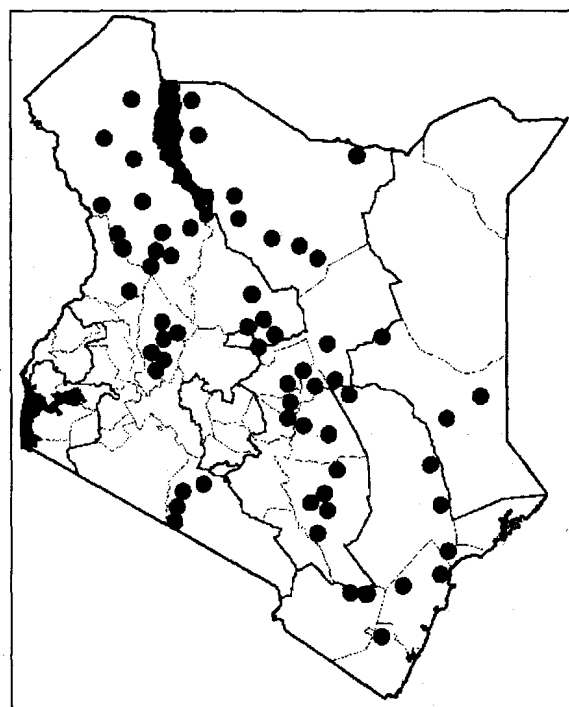
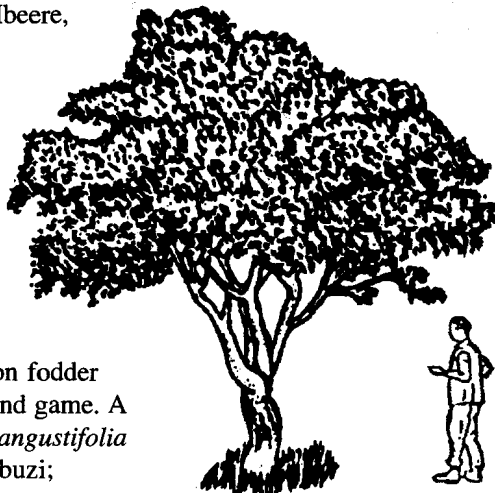
SEED: 2,000–3,000 seeds per kg.

treatment: Wash off the surrounding pulp.

storage: Cannot be stored for long (recalcitrant). Use fresh seed.

MANAGEMENT: Slow growing; pruning, lopping.

REMARKS: The sweet flesh of ripe fruit is sucked (Taita, Kamba, Tharaka, Mbeere, Daasanach). Stem wood made into blunt arrowheads used for shooting birds (Daasanach). *Boscia* spp. are important shade trees, especially for pastoral communities. They are also important dry-season fodder for both livestock and game. A related species, *B. angustifolia* (Giriama: Mlalambuzi;



Maasai: Oloireroi; **Sanya:** Muki go jama; **Somali:** Chieh; **Tugen:** Lito;) is common in dry areas. A small evergreen tree, usually 5–7 m with a rounded crown and silvery grey bark and a thick trunk, which is often leaning. The leaves are small and narrow (usually less than 1.5 cm wide and 8 cm long) and grow in bunches along the old woody twigs or in a spaced fashion in young shoots. Widespread all over Kenya in dry bushland and wooded grassland, especially along dry river courses, 0–2,200 m. Agroclimatic Zones IV–VI. Stem wood used for tool handles and the bark has a good fibre used for strings. An excellent shade tree. *B. salicifolia* (**Duruma:** Mtsonga mbanga; **Luo:** Akado, Akado marachar; **Somali:** Lamblesha, Lamloch) is found in low-altitude grassland, 0–1,350 m. A deciduous tree, usually to 8 m, with grooved bark, looking remarkably like a eucalyptus tree, the branches pendulous and leaves long and narrow to 12 cm. This species has edible fruit too.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Blundell, 1987; ITDG and IIRR, 1996; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Noad and Birnie, 1989; von Maydell, 1990 (*B. angustifolia*).