

Capparis tomentosa

Capparidaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Boran:** Gorrah gel; **Digo:** Kikombetsui; **Giriama:** Mtsodz sagunga, Mugwada paka; **Kamba:** Mutandambo, Kiuuka; **Luhya:** Shikumbumbu; **Luo:** Ongono; **Malakote:** Goranyilo, Gora za jovu, Namwaliko; **Maasai:** Olaturdiai; **Meru:** Mukarakara; **Pokomo:** Muchovi, Mbutula; **Pokot:** Tipoyuo; **Sanya:** Gorra adhi; **Somali:** Gombor lik; **Swahili:** Mbada paka; **Taita:** Wangombe; **Turkana:** Ekorokorait.

DESCRIPTION: A thorny shrub to 3 m or a climber reaching 10 m. **THORNS:** Small, curved back, in pairs beside leaves. **LEAVES:** Long and oval, up to 9 x 4 cm, grey-green, thick and leathery, on a short stalk, may be hairy below, slightly pink. **FLOWERS:** To 5 cm across with very many white stamens, 4 small white petals, 4 sepals; ovary on a stalk. Flowers usually in groups. **FRUIT:** Hang down on long stalks to 5 cm, rounded 1–5 cm across, shiny orange-red with pink flesh, drying black, persisting on the bush.

ECOLOGY: Widespread in tropical Africa from Senegal through the Sahel to Eritrea and East Africa to South Africa and the Mascarene Islands. Occurs in semi-arid and humid lowland, highland woodlands, forest edges and scrub, riverine woodland or bushland, secondary bushland, coral-rag forest, 0–2,100 m. Widespread in Kenya. Agroclimatic Zones III–VI. Seeds in August at the coast.

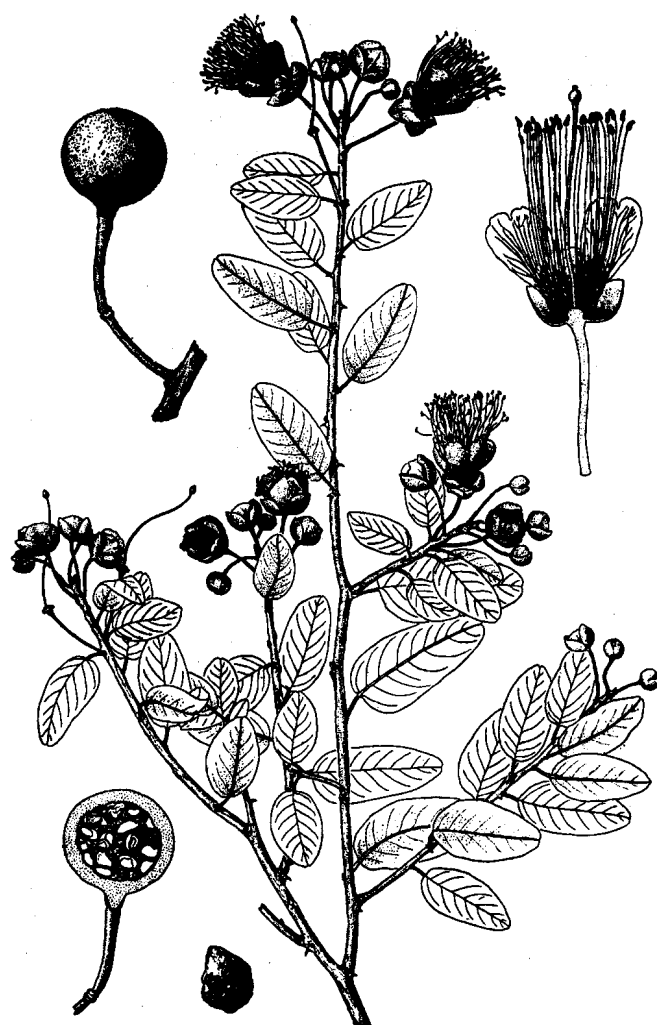
USES: Firewood, medicine (roots, leaves, bark), live fence, dead fence (cut branches).

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, wildings, cuttings.

MANAGEMENT: Lopping.

REMARKS: A poisonous shrub that causes poisoning in livestock in the dry season. Roots are said to be very poisonous. Fruits especially poisonous to camels. *C. fascicularis* (**Boran:** Gura gala; **Kipsigis:** Kiptabeliet; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Lunani; **Luo:** Ong'ono; **Maasai:** Olaturdei; **Orma:** Gora; **Samburu:** Lereday, Laturidei; **Somali:** Gora; **Tugen:** Ekaburu, Kakabuiwo) is also fairly common in Kenya from 0 to 2,200 m. Leaves tend to be narrow, up to 10 x 3.5 cm. Fruit green to red and up to 2 cm across. The species is used for medicine among the Maasai and produces fruits that are much liked by elephants and monkeys. *C. sepiaria* (**Boni:** Nothake; **Embu:** Mutandambogo; **Giriama:** Mugwada paka; **Malakote:** Rhemanguzi; **Kamba:** Itandambo; **Meru:** Mutandambogo; **Orma:** Gora; **Samburu:** Lakirdinga; **Somali:** Gora, Gedh chala; **Swahili:** Mpapura chui) is also widely distributed, especially in the drier lowland zones (0–1,450 m) and at the coast. It has smaller hairy or hairless leaves (up to 4 cm), flowers and fruits (7–12 mm). Fruits turn red on ripening. Roots are said to be poisonous.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; ITDG and IIRR, 1996; Kokwaro, 1993; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; von Maydell, 1990.



Section of fruit showing seeds

