

Combretum collinum

Combretaceae



Indigenous

Am: *Tinjut*

Eng: *Variable combretum*

Or: *Alahingale, Dabacha, Dandale, Gomori*

Tg: *Sawa*

Ecology

A tree widespread in tropical and subtropical Africa from West Africa into the Sudan and Ethiopia, throughout East Africa and south to southern Africa. It occurs in arid and semi-arid savannah, steppe, and scrub in Acacia, Combretum-Terminalia, woodland and wooded grasslands with incense trees (*Boswellia* spp.). It grows in Dry and Moist Kolla and Weyna Dega agroclimatic zones, 400–2,000 m.

Uses

Firewood, medicine (leaves), bee forage, fencing (cut branches).

Description

A small- to medium-sized tree 4–12 m, most variable and many subspecies have been separated on details of leaf arrangement, fruit size, hairiness and scales. BARK: Red-brown when young, later grey, rough, scaly and thick. LEAVES: Difficult to describe as they vary greatly both in size and other details. Usually rather tough, not thin, darker above than below. The underside is densely dotted with tiny silvery scales only visible with a lens. Leaves hairy or not, usually ovate 9 x 4 cm but they may reach 22 x 8 cm, the side veins 6–20 pairs. Leaf stalk 1–4 cm. FLOWERS: Cream-white-yellow, sweet-scented and very

small, on spikes about 6 cm long, usually shorter than the leaves. The tree stands out when covered with flowers. FRUIT: 4-winged, the shape variable but generally oval 2.5–5.5 cm, rust-red when young, later dark golden-brown, even grey to purple, dull, hairy or shiny. The many scales catch the light so the surface shines like metal.

Propagation

Seedlings (sow seed in pots), wildings.

Seed

Collect the winged fruit before they are too dry.

Treatment: Open the winged fruit to get the seed before sowing or soak in cold water for 24 hours.

Storage: Seeds cannot be stored for long. Use fresh seed. Once the seed is extracted it should be sown immediately. It is difficult to extract the seed from very dry fruits.

Management

Coppicing, lopping, pollarding.

Remarks

Four subspecies are recognized in Ethiopia. The hard and durable wood burns well and makes very good charcoal. It is used to smoke brewing and milking pots. The smoke is also believed to repel evil spirits.



Photos: Patrick Maundu



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