

***Commiphora rostrata***

Bursereaceae

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Boran:** Dainjo, Dirraa; **Malakote:** Choneh; **Mbeere:** Munyei; **Orma:** Udesi; **Pokot:** Lokimet; **Rendille:** Galdayan (Korr); **Samburu:** Lmaim, Ltilimani; **Somali:** Dainjo, Danusagar, Danu, Janau (Wajir), Jano (Isiolo), Jenau, Hanguli (Eldas); **Tharaka:** Mutunkuuri; **Turkana:** Eurumosing, Lekora, Lokimeta.

**DESCRIPTION:** A deciduous strong-smelling shrub or small tree to 4 m. **Lateral shoots ending in strong spines.** **BARK:** Smooth, maroon or dark purple to almost black. Stems exuding a copious, clear, **aromatic sap.** **LEAVES:** Short-stalked and elliptic. **FLOWERS:** Male and female separate. Male flowers with red petals, up to 20 on a common stalk. **Female flowers single or 2 together, very slender.** **FRUIT:** Red, pointed, with wiry stalks. The plant is usually leafless at the time of flowering.

**ECOLOGY:** Grows in south-eastern Ethiopia, Somalia and northern and eastern Kenya in dry open *Acacia*–*Commiphora*–*Boswellia* bushland, 80–1,050 m, mostly on sandy, gravelly soils or on rocky areas. Rainfall: 200–400 mm. Agroclimatic Zones V–VI.

**USES:** Arrow shafts, edible leaves, seasoning, drink (tea from bark), refreshment (chewed twigs), medicine (bark, young twigs), fodder (leaves), live fence, glue, cleaning out gourds, toothbrushes.

**PROPAGATION:** Propagated vegetatively by stem cuttings.

**REMARKS:** Leaves eaten raw (Somali, Marakwet); salty or tasting of oxalic acid. Leaves used as a relish or cooked to add flavour to food (Mbeere). Bark or branches used in the preparation of tea (Turkana, Daasanach). Stem pith chewed to quench thirst (Somali). Sap used to glue feathers on to arrow shafts (Pokot). The bark is pounded, put into a new gourd with water and left for 3 days, then washed out leaving a nice smell in the gourd (Pokot). Two varieties are known: var. *rostrata*, an erect shrub, is the more common and widespread variety. It flowers in April–May (Tana), November–December (southern Turkana, Tana, Isiolo). Var. *reflexa*, with a low creeping and spreading habit, is found in Dandu in north-eastern Kenya, south-east Ethiopia and in Somalia. Scarce.

**FURTHER READING:** Beentje, 1994; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999.

