

Diospyros scabra**Ebenaceae****Indigenous**

COMMON NAMES: **Boran:** Locho, Locko; **Pokot:** Tuwot; **Rendille:** Yaga aqurra; **Samburu:** Lgotoi; **Tugen:** Tuwot; **Turkana:** Elim.

DESCRIPTION: A densely branched shrub or tree to 7 m, the young parts hairy. **BARK:** Distinctive rough and black, breaking into squares. **LEAVES:** Hard and rough, small, oval or widest in the middle, dark green, 2–3 cm long, tip and base rounded, midrib clear below, alternate along stems. **FLOWERS:** Insignificant. **FRUIT:** Oval, glossy green, about 1 cm, becoming black, tip pointed, with a small 3-part calyx below.

ECOLOGY: Found in eastern Africa, north-eastern Uganda, south Sudan, south Ethiopia and the north-western quarter of Kenya, mainly growing close to rivers and streams or on stony hillsides in dry country. Common along luggas in Turkana, Baringo and Samburu Districts to about 900 m. Agroclimatic Zones V–VI.

USES: Firewood, timber (construction), furniture (stools), farm implements, edible fruit, medicine, fodder (fruit, leaves, seeds), bee forage, shade, dye, veterinary medicine.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings.

SEED: 4,000–5,000 seeds per kg.
storage: Use fresh seed.

MANAGEMENT: Slow growing.

REMARKS: Fruits are edible but are rarely eaten (Daasanach). Wood very hard. Made into sticks used for planting sorghum (Daasanach).

Many other *Diospyros* species have edible fruit and useful timber. Good examples are the following. *D. consolatae* (**Giriama:** Mbat'the; **Mbeere:** Mutoroma; **Sanya:** Kararacha; **Swahili:** Mwaa, Mlala sungura) is a shrub or tree hardly exceeding 6 m. Old bark dark and scaly. Leaves hairless and up to 10 cm long. Fruit up to 1.7 cm with an enlarged calyx. The species is found from Mbeere and Makuani Districts to the coast. *D. squarrosa* (**Chonyi:** Mpweke; **Giriama:** Mupweki; **Sanya:** Mpweke; **Swahili:** Mpweke) is a shrub or tree to 10 m with a slender trunk and flaking black bark. Young parts hairy (pink). Common at the coast where it is a popular tree. Leaves large, to 10 cm, shiny above. Fruit 1–2 cm, eaten by monkeys and birds. It is used for yokes (water carrying), walking sticks, pestles, poles and timber for rough building. The tree is found in hollows and valleys and at forest edges, Lamu to Shimoni. Try direct sowing at site with this species since it grows slowly from seedlings. *D. cornii* (**Digo:** Mkulu; **Giriama:** Mkulu; **Kamba:** Mukongo; **Pokomo:** Olate; **Somali:** Kolati; **Swahili:** Mkulu) is an evergreen tree to 10 m or more with a greyish black bark. Leaves rusty hairy below. Fruit up to 2.2 cm. It is found in coastal bushlands and grasslands and may be very common in parts of north coast such as Boni Forest. It is used for poles, etc. *D. wajirensis* is a small tree found around Wajir, as the name suggests. It has edible fruit and the wood is used in construction.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; ITDG and IIRR, 1996; Maundu et al., 1999.

