

***Grewia tenax***

Tiliaceae

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Boran:** Deeka, Deeka imimo, Irgegud, Murie, Sarkam; **Daasanach:** Damich, Damis (plural); **Gabra:** D'eeke; **Giriama:** Mkone kilaa; **Ichamus:** Ilkogomi; **Maasai:** Eirri narok, Oirri, Oyirri, Iri (plural); **Pokomo:** Mkote wa guba; **Pokot:** Toronwo, Taran (plural); **Rendille:** Domook (fruit), Domook derle, Mulahanyo; **Samburu:** Ikarayoi, Ikogomi, Ingongomi, Ipuan, Ipuusani, Irri, Loitipai; **Sanya:** Haroru korma; **Somali:** Amasha, Danfarur (Mandera), Deka, Demak, Kamasha, Mured (Garissa), Murie; **Tugen:** Taran, Turonwet; **Turkana:** Engomo; **Wardei:** Dekoa.

**DESCRIPTION:** Small much-branched, often multi-stemmed, straggling deciduous shrub to 4 m or more. Stems narrow, whitish grey with longitudinal streaks. Older stems dark grey. **BARK:** Dark grey, dotted with white breathing pores (lenticels) on young stems. **LEAVES:** In a variety of shapes, papery, usually **rounded and small, only 1.5–4 cm** on a slender stalk, the **edge round-toothed**, the surface hairy, smooth or slightly sandpapery. **FLOWERS:** **White and solitary, often opposite leaves**, shortly stalked, the **outer green-yellow sepals 9–20 mm, the inner white petals smaller**. **FRUIT:** Each divided into **1–4 rounded lobes** attached to each other, each lobe to 3–6 mm across, **smooth and red when ripe, edible**.

**ECOLOGY:** A shrub or small tree of very dry zones and on sandbanks from Morocco, the Sahel, the Arabian peninsula and further east to India, south to Namibia and South Africa. Widely distributed in most of Kenya except in Western and Nyanza Provinces. Found in dry acacia bushland, often along watercourses, e.g. in Daa Valley, Mandera District; 0–1,250 m. Soils varied, but usually rocky and red clay. Agroclimatic Zones V–VII.

**USES:** Firewood, tool handles, utensils (clubs), walking sticks, farm implements, bows and arrows, edible fruit, medicine (roots), fodder (leaves, shoots and fruit for goats and camels), bee forage, fibre (bark), gum, toothbrushes, veterinary medicine, local pens for writing Koranic tablets.

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings, wildings, root suckers, direct sowing at site. *Grewias* generally reproduce well naturally if protected from grazing and fire.

**SEED:** About 21,000 seeds per kg.

**treatment:** None, or soak in cold water for 12 hours.

**storage:** Can be stored for a year in an airtight container.

**MANAGEMENT:** Coppicing

**REMARKS:** This is the most useful *Grewia* in the arid parts of Kenya—as a fodder plant and food for people. Ripe and unripe fruit are eaten raw. They are sweet and may be eaten whole or chewed and only the sweet juice swallowed. If large amounts of seeds are ingested they may cause severe constipation. Fruit may be pounded, dried and stored and eaten later along with fat to avoid constipation (Turkana). Juice may also be made by extracting the pulp in water (Turkana). The shrub is widely used in traditional medicine. Sticks are made into bows and arrows (Pokot) and the thin ones are used as toothbrushes. Bark fibres have been used for binding in huts. The shoots and fruit are excellent camel and goat fodder.

**FURTHER READING:** Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Blundell, 1987; Dharani, 2002; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; von Maydell, 1990.

