

Leptadenia hastata

Asclepiadaceae

Indigenous**COMMON NAMES:** **Pokot:** Chesakisyon; **Turkana:** Ekamong'o.

DESCRIPTION: A leafy climber, hairy on all parts; milky latex exudes if broken. **LEAVES:** Opposite and entire, long oval to 10 cm, light green, the base flat to rounded, on a stalk. **FLOWERS:** Cream, in dense masses on short stalks beside leaves, each flower with 5 pointed sepals, the petal lobes hairy. **FRUIT:** In 2 free pod-like segments each up to 8 x 2 cm, splitting along one side to release cottony winged seeds.

ECOLOGY: Distributed from West Africa through Sudan, the Congo basin to eastern and southern Africa, Botswana and Madagascar. In Kenya, restricted to the north-western part of the country along the Turkwel and Kerio Rivers and elsewhere in Baringo, Turkana and West Pokot in bushland and riverine bushland. Only riverine in the driest areas. Seen as a creeper in open areas or climbing on bushes; 500–1,600 m. Agroclimatic Zones VI–VII.

USES: Edible young leaves, medicine (sap from stems applied to wounds), fodder (leaves for camels, goats and cattle), veterinary medicine.

PROPAGATION: Unknown. Can probably be propagated by seeds.

REMARKS: The plant is highly appreciated in West Pokot and southern Turkana among the Ng'ikebootok community, where it is used as a leafy vegetable. The plant is very common in the flood plains of the Turkwel River and has potential as a hedge and vegetable.

A plant with a similar habit in the same family is *Pentarrhinum insipidum* (**Maasai:** Orkorirr; **Samburu:** Lng'arboi, Ng'arboi; **Somali:** Ayab), a climber with simple, entire, heart-shaped leaves, fruit to 10 cm long, with a milky latex and numerous projections on the surface. Widely distributed in Kenya in bushland, especially in low-lying seasonally flooded areas. Common on alluvial and light sandy clay soils. The leaves are also used as a vegetable and are said to be tasty (Maasai). The ripe fruit are edible and liked by children and women.

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

