

Oxytenanthera abyssinica

Gramineae

Indigenous

Bl: Ma
Tr: Hil

Eng: Lowland bamboo

Tg: Arkai

Ecology: In continental Africa the lowland bamboo grows in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Tanzania. It is the most hardy of the three African bamboos, often found on very poor soils. In most places it is in demand for building purposes. In Eritrea, it is common in Elabered, the Tekeze and Anseba valleys and Debrehil, 1,000-1,800 m.

Uses: **Poles** (building), **fences, fodder** (leaves), walking sticks.

Description: A tall grass to 7 m or more, in dense clumps, arching over. Unusual in having **solid stems**, up to 10 cm in diameter at the base. **LEAVES:** Blue-green, **base rounded**, the **tip long and spiny**, usually 15 x 2.5 cm, but up to 30 x 5 cm. There are **irritating dark brown hairs** on the leaf sheath. **FLOWERS AND FRUIT:** Spikelets narrowed, pointed, 2.5 cm in dense **rounded clusters** 6 cm across. **Flowering takes place about** every 7 years. Then the clumps die down but shoot up one year later from the rhizomes.

Propagation: Suckers and rhizomes; rarely, seed.

Seed:

treatment:

storage:

Management: Needs to be controlled by cutting back.

Remarks: Like most bamboos, each plant flowers only once and then dies. Fences are susceptible to damage by termites and borers. The plant survives fire in its natural habitat. Small stems can be used for pipes and arrow shafts, larger ones for fences, building, furniture, beds and baskets.

