

Phytolacca dodecandra

Phytolaccaceae

Indigenous

Sh: *Seber*

Tg: *Shibti*

Tr: *Sobeth*

Ecology: A shrub commonly found in degraded riverine woodland and secondary forest areas. In Eritrea, it is distributed throughout the country between 1,300 and 2,400 m.

Uses: Medicine (roots, fruit, leaves, seed), soil conservation, bee forage, soap (fruit), insecticide (molluscicide).

Description: A climbing or scrambling shrub which can be a strong liane in riverine forest; long hanging branches to 9 m. **LEAVES:** Alternate, shiny oval to 25 cm, **tip blunt, stalk and midrib pink**, rather thick and juicy. **FLOWERS:** Strongly scented, cream-green, on spikes to 40 cm, often opposite leaves, each flower with many stamens on a fleshy disc, 5 sepals but no petals. **FRUIT:** Rounded soft fruit to 7 mm across, **orange-red** when ripe, a seed in each section.

Propagation: Seedlings, cuttings.

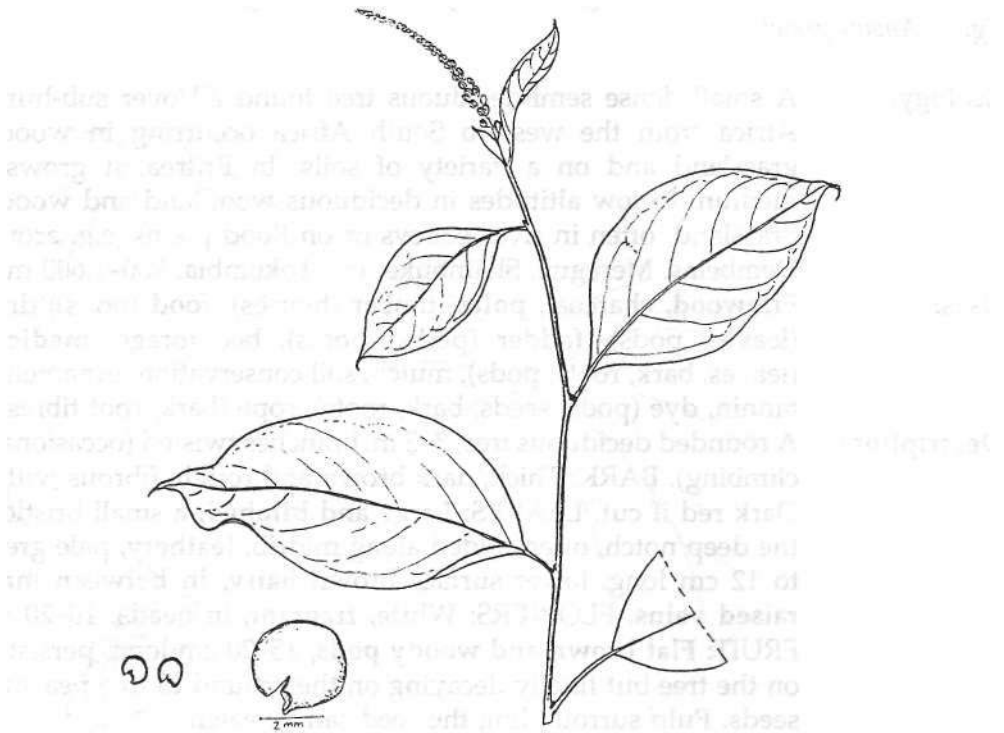
Seed:

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Can be stored.

Management: Trimming.

Remarks: This is a very poisonous plant, both to people and grazing animals. The leaves and roots are particularly poisonous. It should, therefore, be used with great care as an overdose of the medicine can cause death. Sheep and cattle have died from eating the leaves during times of drought. Juice from the leaves or roots can cause abortion, and, suitably applied, can kill sperm. The commonest medicinal use is for killing intestinal worms. The juice can also be used to kill mosquito larvae in ponds, etc., and to kill snails and the young stages of the organism which causes bilharzia (schistosomiasis) in man. The fruits can be used as a soap for washing clothes.



fruit and seed

