

**Rhamnus staddo**

## Rhamnaceae

**Indigenous**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Boran:** Gale; **Kikuyu:** Mubura; **Kipsigis:** Ketarwet, Kosisitiet; **Kisii:** Omonmanengo; **Luo:** Rahande, Amurukia; **Maasai:** Olkokola; **Marakwet:** Kipser; **Meru:** Mukuruu, Ngakula; **Ogiek:** Arapsoi, Korsosiat; **Samburu:** Ikokokai, Kokilai.

**DESCRIPTION:** A bushy rigidly branched shrub or small tree growing to 5 m. **BARK:** Grey-brown, smooth. **LEAVES:** Small, narrow and oblong, to 5.5 cm long, clustered on short side branches, which may be spine-tipped. The leaf tip is pointed, rounded or notched, the edge with small rounded teeth. **FLOWERS:** Small green-yellow, only 2–4 together, 4 petals, almond scented. **FRUIT:** Red to purple berries, turning black, only 5 mm across.

**ECOLOGY:** Distributed from Eritrea and Ethiopia south through eastern Africa and in the Democratic Republic of Congo to Zimbabwe. In Kenya, it is found in highland areas in Central, Rift Valley, Nyanza and Western Provinces as well as northern Kenya. It grows in rocky places and valleys in dry upland forest edges or secondary evergreen bushland, bushed grasslands, 1,400–2,900 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–IV.

**Uses:** Firewood, tool handles, seasoning, flavouring (leaves), medicine (roots).

**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings.

**SEED:**

**treatment:** Not necessary.

**storage:** Seed can be stored for long periods.

**MANAGEMENT:** The species tolerates repeated coppicing.

**REMARKS:** *R. staddo* is an extremely important medicinal plant in eastern Africa. *R. prinoides* (**Kikuyu:** Mukarakinga; **Kipsigis:** Kosisitiet; **Kisii:** Omungura; **Maasai:** Olkonyil; **Marakwet:** Kosisit; **Meru:** Mugarona; **Ogiek:** Kwasisitiet; **Samburu:** Ikenyeli; **Sabaot:** Moyawarura, Muapuarua; **Tugen:** Kukutua, Mizisitwa), a related species, is used a great deal in traditional medicine. It is a shrubby plant, occasionally a small tree, with grey bark, shiny leaves and red fruits turning purple-black on ripening. It has larger leaves than those of *R. staddo*. Both species have a more or less similar distribution but *R. prinoides* also occurs in the Taita Hills.

**FURTHER READING:** Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999 (*R. prinoides*); Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002.

