

Salvadora persica**Salvadoraceae****Indigenous**

COMMON NAMES: **Boran:** Huda; **Chonyi:** Mswaki, Mueza moyo; **Daasanach:** Nyedhe, Nyaa (plural); **Digo:** Mswaki; **English:** Toothbrush tree; **Gabra:** Aadde; **Giriama:** Mswaki, Mjungumoto, Mueza moyo; **Kamba:** Mukayau; **Kambe:** Mswaki, Mueza moyo; **Luo:** Mswak, Nyamit amita; **Maasai:** Oremit, Iremito (plural), Olremit; **Malakote:** Muswaki; **Orma:** Adhe; **Pokomo:** Muade; **Pokot:** Asiokonion, Chokowo; **Rendille:** Hayay, Akhai (fruit); **Samburu:** Sokotu, Sokotei; **Sanya:** Adhei, Rigathu; **Somali:** Adhee (Mandera), Adhei; **Swahili:** Mswaki; **Taita:** Kizingumoto; **Tharaka:** Makayayu; **Tugen:** Sogotaiwa, Barsute; **Turkana:** Esokon, Esekon.

DESCRIPTION: An evergreen trailing shrub or small tree, 3–7 m, **young flexible branches hanging down**, older wood twisted. **BARK:** Smooth and pale, later brown and corky. **LEAVES:** **Yellow-green, dull, rather fleshy** but hard with rough gland dots and raised veins, **oblong to rounded to 5 cm**. **FLOWERS:** In loose heads, to 10 cm, small, white. **FRUIT:** **White, then pink to purple, 1 cm**, one seeded, juicy, sweet but peppery.

ECOLOGY: Found in India and Sri Lanka, the Middle East, North and West Africa and south to Mozambique and Angola. Grows in most low-altitude areas of Kenya, especially arid, semi-arid and coastal regions in riverine vegetation on sandy, sandy-loam and alluvial soils or on rocky ground, 0–1,500 m. Very drought resistant; tolerates areas with less than 200 mm annual rainfall. An important indicator plant of saline soils even though it prefers sandy-clay soils of watercourses. Riverine in very dry areas. Occasionally in red soils in bushland. Agroclimatic Zones V–VI.

USES: Fruit, medicine (roots and bark), fodder (leaves, young shoots and fruit), bee forage, shade, soil conservation, dune fixation, river-bank stabilization, toothbrushes, veterinary medicine.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings. Produces root suckers.

SEED: About 3,400 seeds per kg. Germination: 40–50%.

treatment: Fruit pulp should be removed and seed washed in water before sowing. Soaking in lukewarm water for 24–72 hours may hasten germination. Soaked, de-pulped seed may germinate in 24 hours.

storage: Dried seed can be stored for about a month.

MANAGEMENT: Slow growing. Trees for shade should be planted near other trees such as *Acacia tortilis* for support. Pollarding for fodder and to produce short stems to be harvested for toothbrushes.

REMARKS: Fruits are eaten whole; have a slightly hot taste. Leaves and fruit are important fodder for camels and goats in dry areas when nothing else is available. Bark

contains an antibiotic that keeps the mouth clean and prevents tooth decay. Toothbrushes made from roots or small branches have been used for over a thousand years, especially by Muslim peoples of India, Arabia and Africa. *S. persica* is evergreen and often the only green plant seen during the dry season in areas where it grows. It provides excellent shade. The wood is soft, white, easy to work and not liable to termite attack.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Albrecht, 1993; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Dharani, 2002; ITDG and IIRR, 1996; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Ruffo et al., 2002; von Maydell, 1990.

