

Terminalia orbicularis

Combretaceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Boran:** Bissik; **Malakote:** Bisiqa; **Orma:** Bisik; **Samburu:** Lebokich; **Somali:** Bisakh, Bisiiq.

DESCRIPTION: A wide-spreading deciduous shrub or small tree to 6 m, often forming thickets. **BARK:** Grey, smooth, later peeling to show yellow green underbark. Young shoots zigzag. **LEAVES:** Almost round, to 1 cm long, base rounded or heart-shaped, tip shortly pointed, crowded on short side shoots. **FLOWERS:** Red with yellow centre, borne in spikes up to 5 cm long, appearing before or with the young leaves: **FRUIT:** Nearly round and winged, up to 10 cm across, pale pink to deep purplish red.

ECOLOGY: A shrub or tree occurring in *Acacia-Commiphora* bushland and locally co-dominant, 100–1,500 m. In Daa Valley (Mandera District), common in gravelly loamy sites 3–5 km from the river. Found in northern Kenya, Taita Hills, Machakos, Tsavo National Parks as well as in Ethiopia and Somalia. Agroclimatic Zones V–VI.

USES: Firewood, timber (construction), furniture, utensils, medicine, fodder (leaves), ornamental, dye.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, wildings.

Management: Pollarding.

REMARKS: The heavy, durable wood has many uses. The Somali use it for making food containers. It has a beautiful grain, and nomads also use it to make decorative carvings that are tied to important camels.

T. polycarpa (**Boran:** Qordobo, Korabo; **Somali:** Hareri; **Swahili:** Mwanga, Mwangati) is a deciduous shrub or tree 3–15 m high. Its long shoots are zigzag, the bark dark grey, smooth, leaves crowded on short side shoots. White or cream flowers, appearing in spikes to 7.5 cm long. Two-winged fruit, yellowish purple or pink, up to 3 x 1.5 cm. Common along luggas in north-eastern Kenya in *Acacia-Commiphora* bushland. Found in the Daa River valley and other parts of Mandera District, but does not occur anywhere else in the country. Agroclimatic Zone VII (riverine in very dry areas). The tree is termite resistant and highly valued for its many uses; threatened. Cash is generated locally through sale of poles. Other uses are charcoal, utensils (pestles), medicine (sap), fodder (leaves and fruits), bee forage and shade.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994; Blundell, 1987; Noad and Birnie, 1989.

