

Encroacher bush species of Namibia

Most of Namibia's savanna rangelands, dry woodlands and Nama-Karoo shrublands are threatened by encroachment of indigenous woody species, which become denser and expand their range. Estimated at more than 30 million hectares of affected land, bush encroachment drastically reduces the grazing capacity of farmland, biodiversity, soil moisture content and groundwater recharge. Some ten indigenous tree species are declared as encroachers. These species include:

Dichrostachys cinerea
Sickle Bush · Sekelbos · Ongete · Omutjete



Dichrostachys cinerea is an aggressive encroacher species, dominating large areas. When rangeland degrades it forms impenetrable thickets of up to 20 000 plants per hectare. This species usually grows as a multi-stemmed, deciduous shrub or small tree. This type of species has pods that are palatable and nutritious. It is widespread in a variety of habitats in the north central plateau and central high grounds of Namibia.

- The bark is dark grey with longitudinal fissure
- The leaves have small leaflets
- It has short spikes with pink flowers at the base and yellow apical at the lower base
- The bunched pods contain hard coated seeds

Acacia mellifera (Senegalia mellifera)
Black Thorn · Swarthaak · Omunkono · Omusaona



Acacia mellifera is Namibia's most abundant encroacher species, growing in all non-desert habitats throughout the country. This bush species can be used for charcoal and because of its high protein content it's a good supplement for fodder.

- The tree is single stemmed, v-shaped with a round crown
- The thorns are hooked and blackish
- The flowers are short roundish white spikes
- The leaves are structured with two pinnae pairs, each with a single leaflet
- The height usually ranges from 1 to 8 metres
- It has thin pods that are papery and straw coloured when mature

Acacia luederitzii (Vachellia luederitzii)
Kalahari Acacia · Baster-haak-en-steek · Omushu



Acacia luederitzii is a multi-stemmed, deciduous tree and very thorny shrub that dominates in eastern Namibia. It has flattened rounded canopies. This species is not easily distinguished from *Acacia reficiens*.

- It has deep reddish coloured bark, common in younger growth
- The thorns occur in pairs, either both hooked, both straight, or one hooked and the other straight
- The leaflets are soft and hairy with 3-9 pinnae per pair
- The pods are conspicuous, reddish brown when ripe
- Flowers are creamy, fluffy white balls

Terminalia sericea
Silver Cluster-leaf · Geelhout · Omugolo · Omusejasetu



Terminalia sericea is a deciduous tree species that grows up to 8 m high. It is restricted to the sandy Kalahari soils to the north eastern area. The tree tends to grow straight and has yellow wood. It is resistant to termites and makes it good for making fencing poles, charcoal and droppers.

- The bark is greyish brown and peels away in strips
- Its leaves are crowded at the end with shoots
- Flowers in axillary spikes, pale-yellow to creamy-white with unpleasant scent
- It has winged fruits which are easily dispersed by wind and animals
- Branches are reddish brown

Colophospermum mopane
Mopane · Mopani · Omusati · Omutati



Colophospermum mopane is a protected tree species in Namibia and may only be controlled with permission of the Directorate of Forestry, if it invades. It is a deciduous tree up to 15 m or shrub found in the north western areas of Namibia. The Mopane hard wood is termite resistant. It is used for fencing, firewood and construction of traditional houses. Leaves are resinous and poorly digested by animals. Overgrazing can seriously reduce its regeneration potential.

- It has large butterfly shaped leaves
- Small whitish flowers and kidney shaped fruits
- The bark is dark grey and longitudinal

Rhigozum trichotomum
Three-thorn · Driedoring · Okatakambindu



Rhigozum trichotomum is a rigid multi-stemmed deciduous shrub up to about 1.5 m high. It grows throughout southern and south central Namibia. It has grey-green hairy foliage. Its small leaves are well liked by small ruminant animals. On degraded rangeland it forms thickets of up to 20 000 plants per hectare. The shrub is best controlled by completely digging it out.

- Its branches grow in whorls of threes
- Leaves are very small, often arranged in clusters
- It bears large white to light pink flowers
- The pods are horn shaped, paired

Terminalia prunioides
Purple-pod Terminalia · Deurmekaarbos · Omuhama



Purple-pod Terminalia is abundant in the north west and north east. It grows as multi-stemmed deciduous shrub on stony and dark (alkaline) soil. This species densifies as a result of grazing mismanagement.

- The bark is dark and rough, vertically striated and fibrous
- Leaves are clustered on dwarf branches
- Long arching branches carrying peg like shoots
- Flowers are white carried in slender spikes
- Fruits are bright plum red to purple wing structured fruits

Acacia reficiens (Vachellia reficiens)
Red Umbrella Thorn · Rooihaak · Omutsiyatsi · Omugondo



Acacia reficiens is very similar to *Acacia luederitzii* and it is very difficult to distinguish between the two species. The seeds germinate easily and are displaced by other species without disturbances. Its wood is harvested for charcoal production.

- The leaflets are very small
- Deep reddish coloured bark, common in younger growth
- The thorns occur in pairs, either both hooked, both straight, or one hooked and the other straight
- The flowers are creamy, fluffy white balls
- Pods are flat, conspicuous and reddish brown when ripe

Acacia nolotica (Vachellia nilotica)
Scented-pod acacia · Lekkerruikpeul · Omutyuula · Olufu



Acacia nolotica is a deciduous shrub with a small round crown and it is fairly widely distributed across north western and central northern Namibia. Its pods are eaten by domestic livestock and used as a supplement to poultry. This species densifies most when in wet lowlands and seasonally submerged rangelands as it can survive high soil moisture content.

- It has straight, white paired thorns that are slightly swept backwards
- The leaves are medium sized with many closely packed leaflets
- The pods are long with constriction between seeds
- Flowers are bright yellow and ball shaped

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