

Invasive alien plants

How these invasive plants came to Namibia? During the German administration, 201 species, subspecies and varieties are propagated at government nurseries of these only 23 are indigenous to Namibia, (first eucalyptus trials were started in 1894 with 28 species and casuarinas was first sown in Windhoek nursery in 1892, Prosopis were first grown in Windhoek nursery in 1905. At Brakwater station trials were started in 1901 with about 15 “exotic” species.

Namibia arid climate hindered the massive propagation of exotic plants if compared to Port Jackson willow around Cape Town and Chromalina along the Natal coast. Generally Exotics grow on disturbed lands in Namibia (why?).

37 invasive alien plants are listed in the “National Review of Invasive Alien Species in Namibia”¹.

On summary, the report mentions 57 invasive or potentially invasive terrestrial alien plant species recorded in Namibia.

According to the NBRI checklist (Kolberg) there are officially about 224 alien plant species in Namibia of which 139 are considered to be naturalised (that is, growing in the wild) and 47 are thought to have harmful or potential harmful effects on the ecosystem.

Most of invasive plants are associated with watercourses and riparian vegetation. Rivers provide both water and a conduit for translocation.

Species	Name	Distribution and impact
<i>Leucaena leucocephala</i>	Wonderboom	Mainly in townlands.
<i>Prosopis chilensis</i> <i>Prosopis glandulosa</i> <i>Prosopis velutina</i>	Prosopis	Most important invasive plant in Namibia due to their extensive distribution, high densities and obvious impact on biodiversity and ecosystem functioning. Have major impact on alluvial aquifers in ephemeral rivers by displacing other ephemeral river species such <i>Faidherbia albida</i> . It is suspected that prosopis spp. Reduce the flooding by absorbing water and reducing the groundwater levels downstream and by consequences affecting the rate of survival of <i>acacia erioloba</i> . It has affected negatively the bird species diversity in South Africa.
<i>Melia azedarach</i>	Syringa	It is a threat to indigenous tree species along the Omuramba omatako.
<i>Nicotiana glauca</i>	Wild tobacco	Wide spread throughout Namibia but more in the arid western half of the country, particularly in river beds and old cultivated lands. Does not compete much with indigenous vegetation.

¹ Consultancy to collect information on invasive alien species in Namibia for southern africa biodiversity support programme. Shirley Bethune, Mike Griffin and Dave Joubert. September 2004.

What are the origin regions of these species?

John, please read section 2.3 Factors that influence species invasions.

Threats of invasive plants:

→¹ The problem of invasive plants in Namibia is considered to be relatively modest.
Major threat to biodiversity and ecosystem degradation.

→¹ The biological, social and economic impacts.

Legislations:

Lack of national policy on invasive alien species.