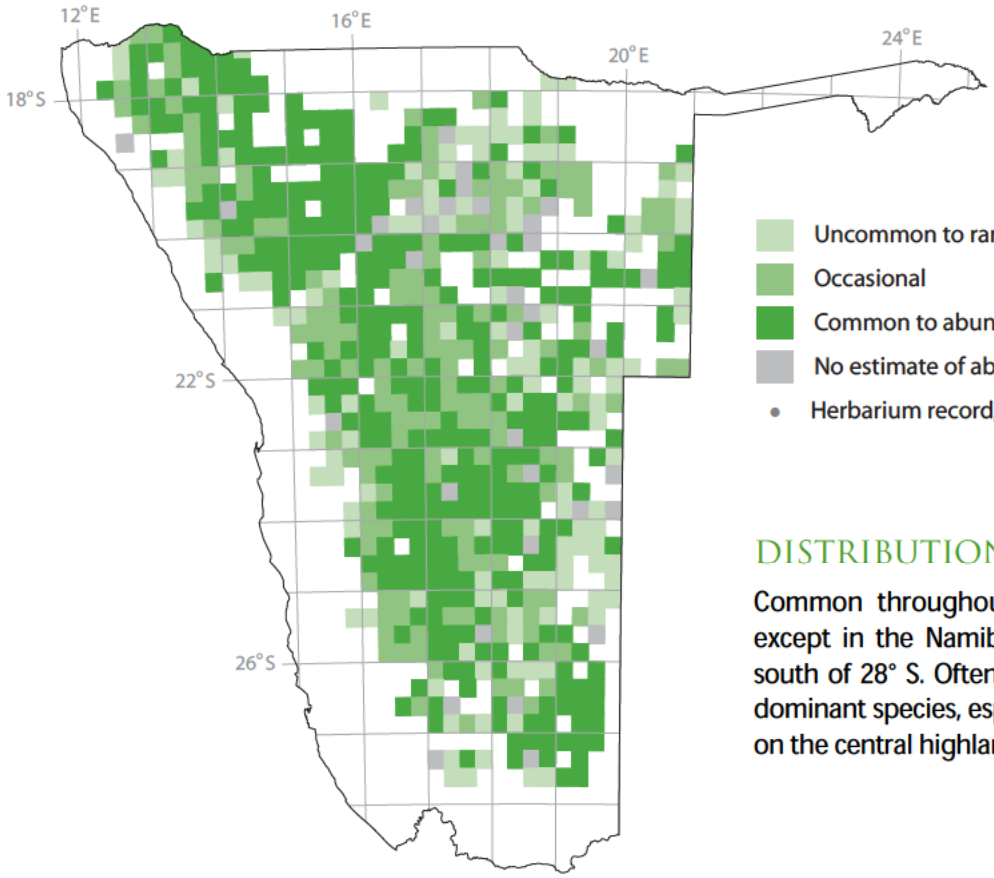
Catophractes alexandri

Ghabbabos

Trumpet-thorn, rattlepod (E); trompetdoring (A); Schwartzdornsilberbusch, Gabbabusch (G); omundumba (H); !gaba (K); mutwatwa (L)

[2,346 records from 665 (62%) squares]

Rigid shrub. BRANCHES **pairs at right angles to each other; bearing straight thorns that are grey and densely woolly at first, becoming brown-black later**. LEAVES simple, **obovate to oblong; densely grey-woolly**, paler below than above; veins prominent below; margin toothed and wavy. FLOWERS **solitary, trumpet-shaped with long tube; white to pale pink**. FRUIT **a woody, warty capsule that rattles when shaken and splits open when the seeds are ripe**.



DISTRIBUTION & ABUNDANCE

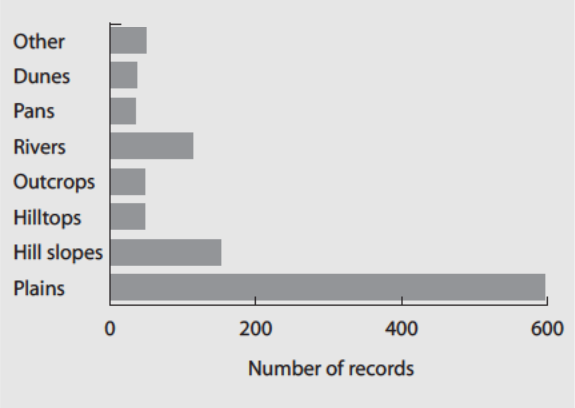
Common throughout most of the country, except in the Namib Desert, the Caprivi and south of 28° S. Often abundant and often the dominant species, especially in the north-west, on the central highlands and in the south.

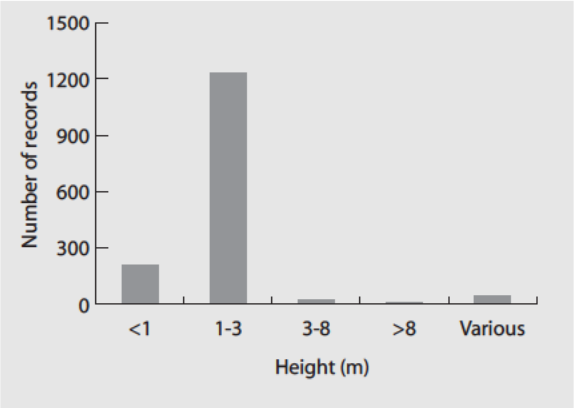
HABITAT

Found in many habitats, but mostly on plains. Also on hill slopes and along dry rivers in many areas; around pans in the central-east and south-east; on dunes and in interdune streets in the south-east. Uncommon in dunes, but common in the interdune streets. Most often on calcrete, but also other rocky, stony and gravel substrates, including granite and mica schist.

GROWTH FORM

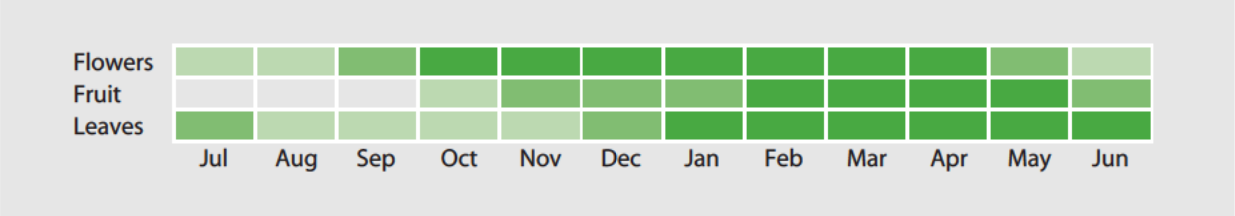
A shrub up to 3 m high, rarely higher; often thicket-forming.





ANNUAL CYCLE

FLOWERS mainly from September to May, with a peak in March and April, but sporadic flowering has been recorded all year; this species is very responsive to rain and can flower more than once per season. FRUIT mostly from February to May. LEAVES from December till July, with most plants bare from August to November.



GENERAL

This plant is an indicator of calcereous soils; it often grows in association with *Acacia nebrownii* on pans; and is parasitised by *Tapinanthus* spp. It is invasive in many areas, especially disturbed areas, increasing by up to 60% in areas where other species have died back; this trend has become very prominent in the past five years (BES1).

The foliage is eaten by springbok and zebra; it is browsed by black rhino in Etosha; the flowers are eaten by kudu. Goats browse this shrub, and eat the flowers. The roots are used medicinally. The plant is of horticultural potential as it is tolerant of mica schist and thrives best in poor soils, and has attractive, grey foliage and pretty flowers.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

None recorded.