

Colophospermum mopane

Mopane / Omusati

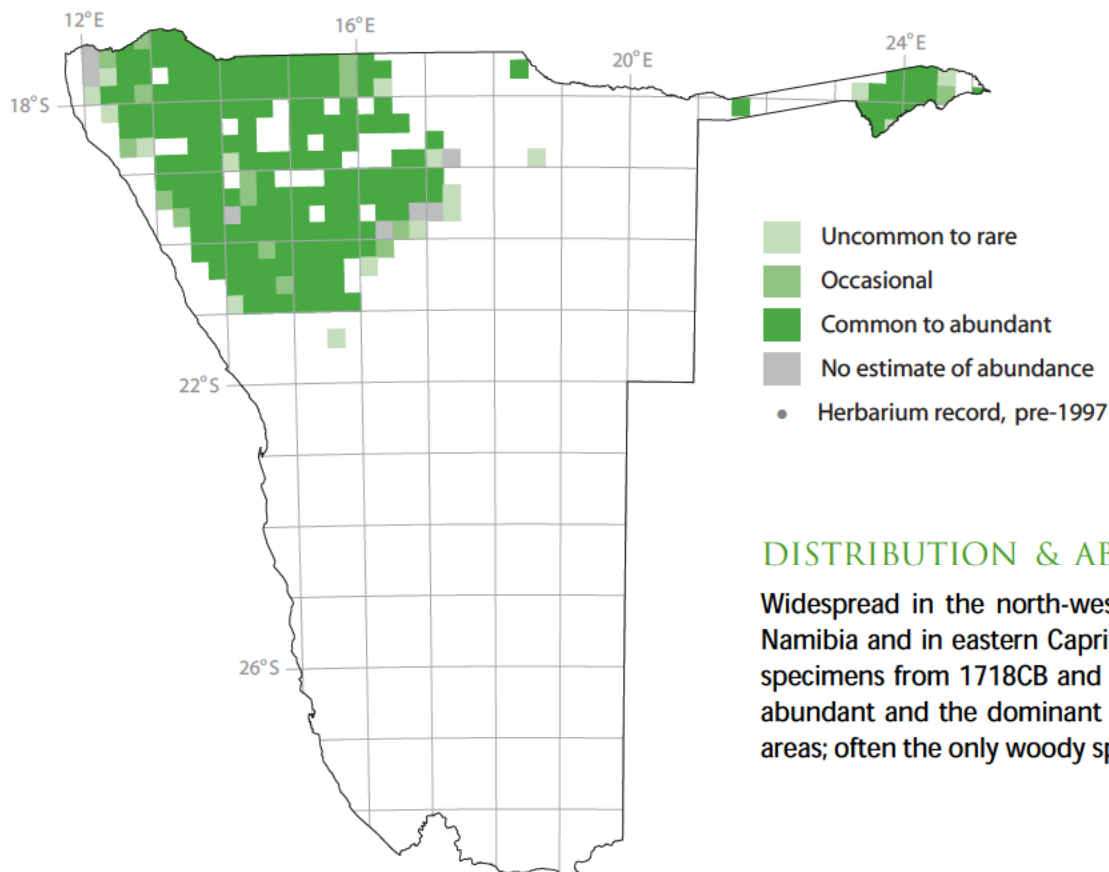
Mopani (A, L); omutati (H); ||gais (J, K); tsaurahais (K); pana (Kx); mupanyi (T)

[1,056 records from 236 (22%) squares]



A semi-deciduous shrub or tree. LEAVES bifoliate, with two sessile **leaflets** resembling **the wings of a butterfly**, **smelling of turpentine** when crushed. FLOWERS small, green-yellow, with 20–25 stamens hanging down. FRUIT a flattened, **kidney-shaped**, leathery, smallish, pale brown pod.

Flowers and green pods easily overlooked. Mopane may only be confused with *Guibourtia coleosperma* by someone who does not know either species.



DISTRIBUTION & ABUNDANCE

Widespread in the north-western quarter of Namibia and in eastern Caprivi, with isolated specimens from 1718CB and 1818DC. Mostly abundant and the dominant species in large areas; often the only woody species.

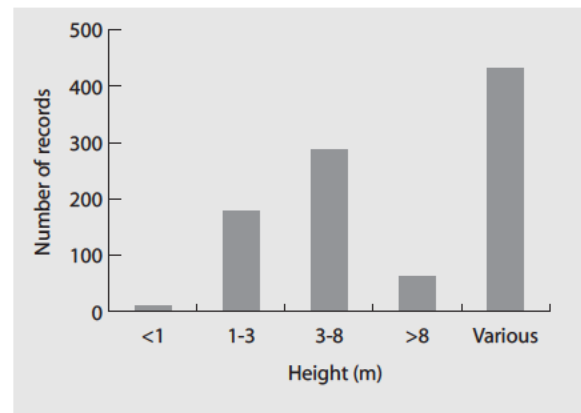
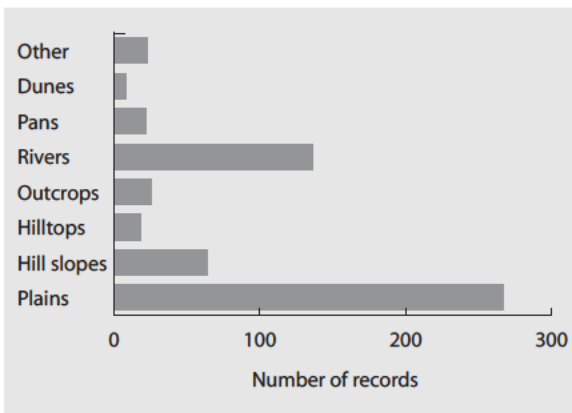
HABITAT

Found in almost all habitats, but most abundant on plains. Also found along dry river courses. Generally on sandy substrates, but also on rock, gravel and calcrete.

GROWTH FORM

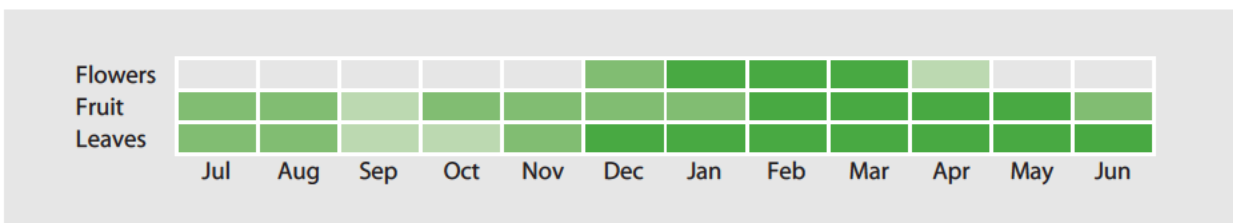
About 60% of records were trees and 40% shrubs; often shrubby trees. Generally up to 8 m high, but sometimes taller, and often in mixed

stands of all height classes. Along the Kunene River, and in places in the Cuvelai and in the Kamanjab area, there are trees higher than 8 m, as well as in eastern Caprivi. In the drier west, trees growing along water courses, or following the flow of an underground aquifer are noticeably taller and more tree-like than those on the plains and hill slopes. The chopping of live wood has turned many single-stemmed trees into multi-stemmed shrubs.



ANNUAL CYCLE

FLOWERS mainly December to March, with occasional flowers produced at other times. Flowering was variable from year to year, with the summer of 1998/99 having the longest flowering period overall – from November until March. It is also variable from region to region – in January in the Caprivi, in December and January in the Karstveld, and January to March in the north-west. FRUIT may be found all year, but most often February to May. LEAVES found on most trees between November and June; with most trees bare from July to October; young leaves are produced October and November.



GENERAL

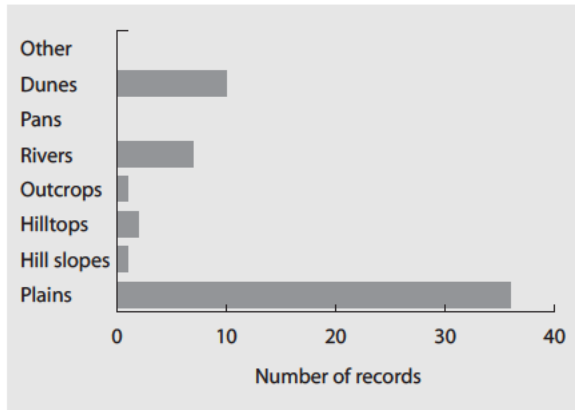
Mopane is the only large woody species in many areas and is heavily utilised for fuel, construction and other purposes. It has the ability to coppice (regrow) from the chopped stump, but in some areas it is being utilised to the point where there is only short, shrubby growth. Mopane may be an encroaching species in some squares and is subject to bush-clearing and harvesting for charcoal.

Both wild and domestic animals browse the leaves. It is an important food for mopane worms, the larvae of the emperor moths, *Imbrasia belina*, which are in turn an important food in local diets. The roots of mopane are harvested for the ornamental trade. Various parts used medicinally; also used for good luck charms. In Himba culture it is believed to be sacred, and used in rituals.

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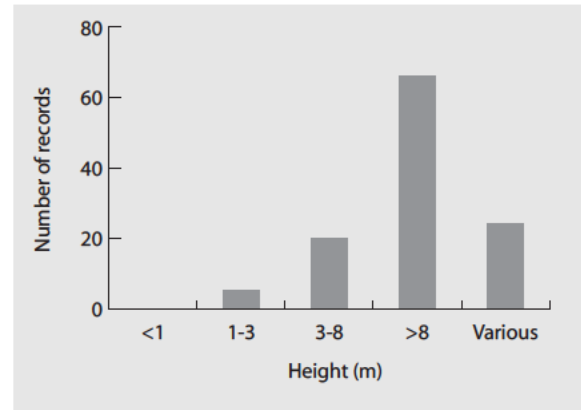
HABITAT

Grows on sandy plains, along rivers and occasionally on dunes or sand hummocks. Usually found in mixed or riverine woodlands.



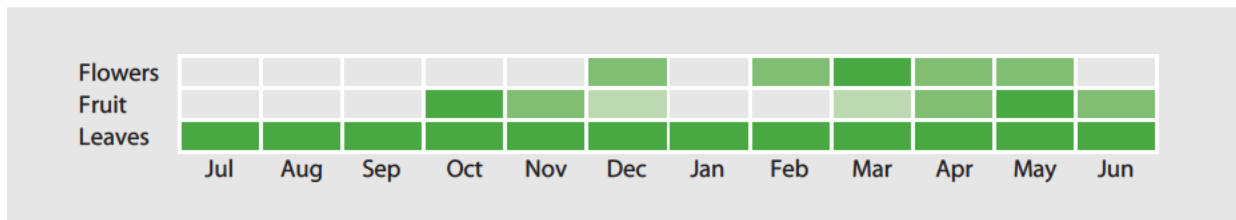
GROWTH FORM

Always a tree, with about 28% of records to 8 m high and 72% taller than 8 m. About 25% of observations had young and old trees of all heights.



ANNUAL CYCLE

FLOWERS December to May, but mostly March; there were no TAP records of flowers before December, but fruit records peaked before December. FRUIT most records in October and May. LEAVES evergreen.



GENERAL

The seeds are edible, but also used ornamentally; the seed oil is used for cooking, as well as cosmetics. The wood is used for watos (dug-out canoes), construction timber and carved utensils. Various parts are used medicinally. *Guibourtia coleosperma* has horticultural potential for frost-free areas, as it is a very attractive, evergreen shade tree with striking fruit, and white, star-like flowers that show up against the dark, glossy foliage.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

None recorded. Protected by forestry legislation.

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CONSERVATION CONCERNS

Although widespread and able to regenerate, this species is still of concern as the rate of exploitation may be greater than the rate at which it can recover. Overgrazing can seriously reduce the production of young plants. Protected by forestry legislation.