

Croton gratissimus

Laventelbos / Mbango

Lavender croton (E);
omumbango (H, O); apupuueb (K);
mukewa (L); mwango (T)

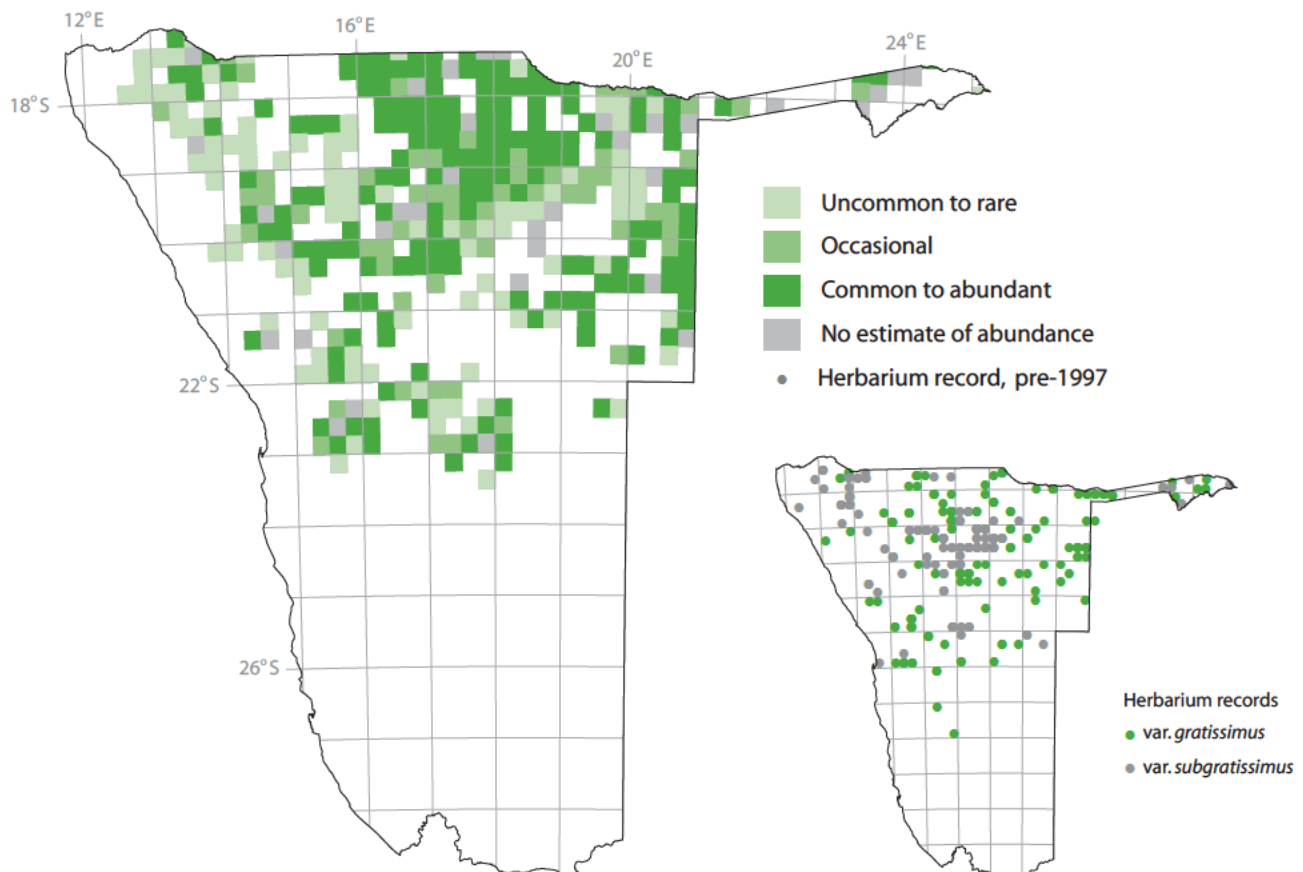
[968 records from 349 (33%) squares]



Lax shrub or tree. BARK rough, grey-brown to black; **young branchlets with a dense covering of silvery hairs and rust-brown scales**. LEAVES simple, elliptic to elliptic-lanceolate, up to 100 mm long; dark green above; **silvery with scattered red-brown scales below**; **petiole 6–25 mm long**. FLOWERS yellow. FRUIT a rough, three-lobed yellowish capsule.

This plant may be confused with *C. menyharthii*, which has a far shorter petiole.

There are two varieties of *C. gratissimus* in Namibia. They are easily distinguished by the presence of rough, stellate hairs on the upper surface of the leaf of var. *subgratissimus* that are absent in var. *gratissimus*. However, few atlassers were aware of this distinction and it is not possible to tell the variety from a moving vehicle. Thus, for the purposes of the TAP, the two varieties have been analysed together.

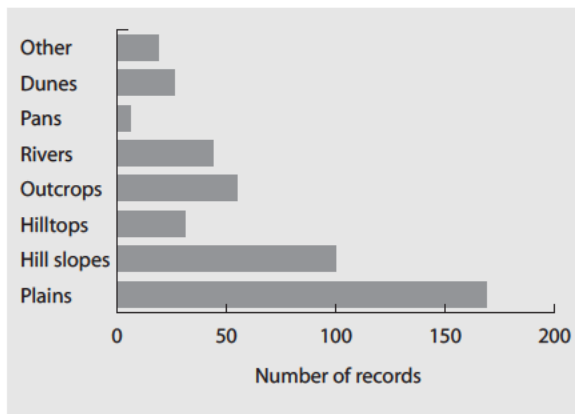


DISTRIBUTION & ABUNDANCE

Widespread and generally common over northern Namibia north of 23° S, except in the Namib Desert and western Caprivi. Common to abundant and dominant in places in the Cuvelai, Karstveld, and the north-east; less common in the west. Variety *gratissimus* is the more common and widespread, occurring over the whole range. Variety *subgratissimus* extends over most of the range, except the north-east apart from eastern Caprivi where it does occur; it is more common in the north-west than variety *gratissimus*.

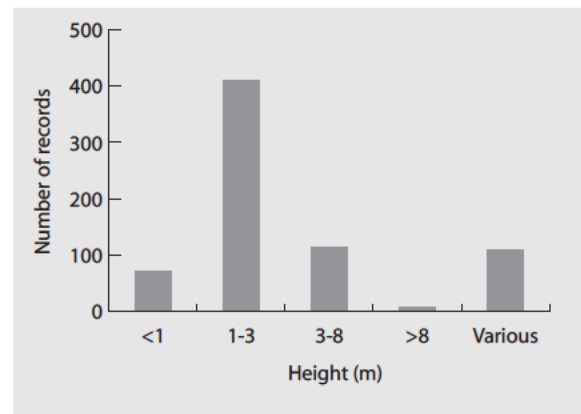
HABITAT

Found in a variety of habitats, mostly on plains, hill slopes and rocky outcrops. It is also found along dry rivers in the north-west, and on dunes in the north-east and central-east. Grows on sand, rock and calcrete.



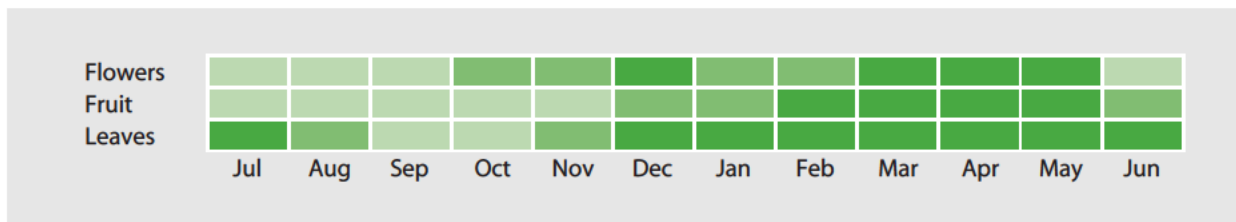
GROWTH FORM

Mostly a shrub, sometimes a tree, up to 3 m high; less often up to 8 m high.



ANNUAL CYCLE

FLOWERS there are two distinct peaks, the first in December, and the second, larger peak in April, although flowering may start in September. **FRUIT** present all year, but most abundant from February to May. **LEAVES** can be found on some individuals all year, but the highest number of bare trees is from August to October; new leaves produced from August to December.



GENERAL

The leaves are browsed by cattle, goats and game. Crushed leaves are used as perfume by young San women; boiled leaves can be used as soap. Various parts of the plant are used medicinally. The shrub tends to become numerous in cleared areas. The specific name, *gratissimus*, means 'most pleasant'. Other, unconfirmed names submitted by atlasers include 'oshibango' and 'oshitupaheke' (both Oshiwambo, MAN1) and N?aq'ara (Ju|'hoan, STE6).

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

None recorded.