

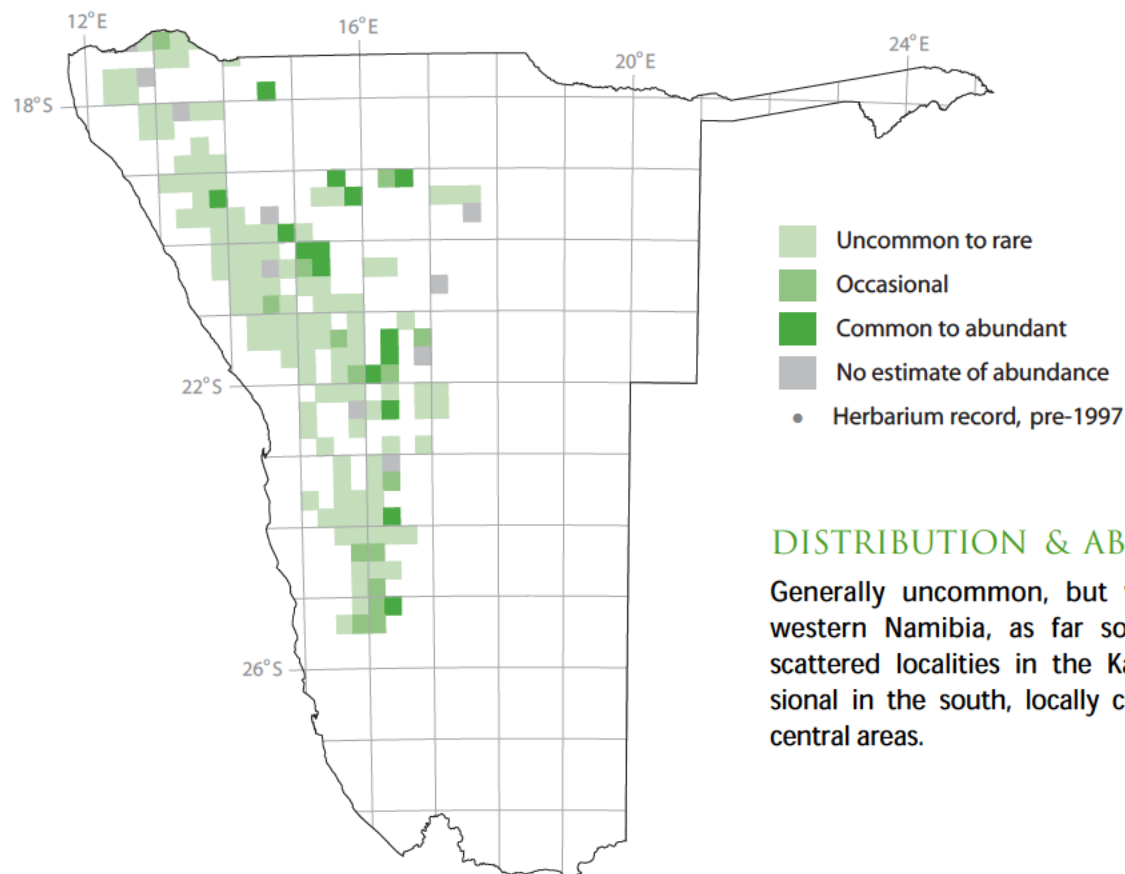
Moringa ovalifolia

Sprokiesboom

Moringa, phantom tree (E); omutindi (H); //khaos (K); oluhongwe (O)

[377 records from 161 (15%) squares]

Deciduous tree with a thick, succulent trunk (up to 1 m in diameter) and feathery-looking canopy. BARK **smooth**, silver-grey to pale brown with a green tint; resinous. LEAVES **clustered near ends of branches**, twice-compound, c. 0.8 m long and 0.6 m broad, leaflets elliptic; petiole long. FLOWERS white, small, numerous, appearing with, before or after young leaves in a branched, axillary spray. FRUIT a long, **light grey-brown, pendulous pod, triangular in cross section, swollen over the seeds, splitting into three sections**. SEEDS with membranous wings.

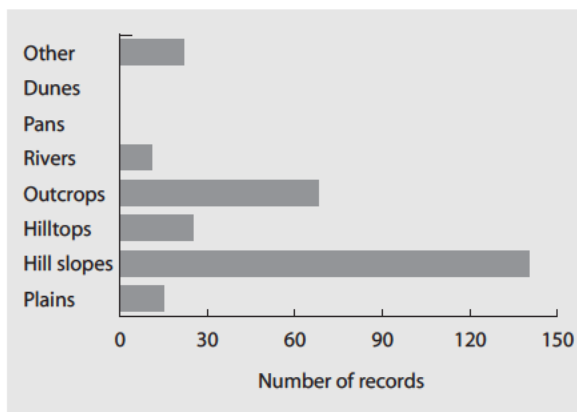


DISTRIBUTION & ABUNDANCE

Generally uncommon, but widespread in western Namibia, as far south as 26° S; scattered localities in the Karstveld. Occasional in the south, locally common in the central areas.

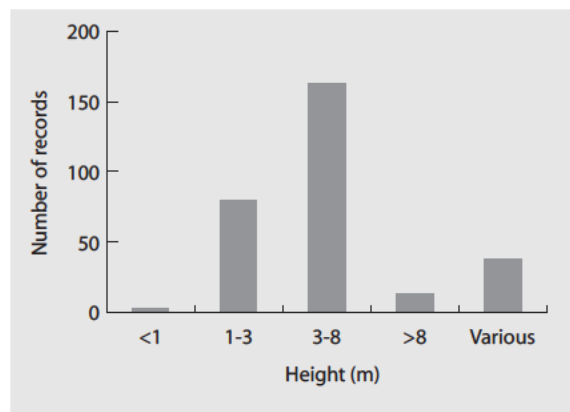
HABITAT

Various, but mainly hill slopes and rocky outcrops. There is a large population of old trees growing on a sandy plain in Etosha National Park (Sprokieswoud, 1915BA).



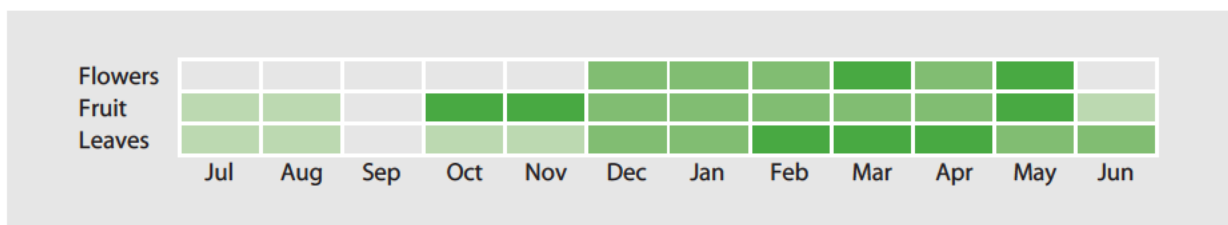
GROWTH FORM

A tree in the 3–8-m height class, with some young, shrubby forms recorded in places. A few, exceptionally large individuals were recorded in the Zebra Mountains (BET1, 1713BA) and in the Karstveld (HOF1).



ANNUAL CYCLE

FLOWERS December to May. **FRUIT** October to May, with occasional records in other months. It is interesting that peak recording of fruit is earlier than flowering, or five to seven months after the previous year's flowers. In gardens in Windhoek, flowers and fruit are often present together. **LEAVES** peak leafing from February to April, corresponding to late rainfall of the north-west.



GENERAL

The family is known for its high-quality, pharmacologically active seed oils and water-clearing agents. Preliminary investigations have been done on *M. ovalifolia*, but nothing has been published to date. Fruit, leaves and roots are edible. Elephant, giraffe and springbok eat the fruit and leaves, while elephants and porcupine gouge the trunks for their moist, pulpy fibres which often results in grotesque shapes in these plants. These usually graceful trees grow easily from seed and have definite horticultural potential.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

This plant is potentially threatened by the pachycaul trade. The Etosha population is being damaged by elephants to such an extent that a large part of it has been fenced-off for protection. Near-endemic to Namibia, extending into southern Angola. Protected by the Nature Conservation Ordinance.