

Prosopis spp.

FABACEAE: MIMOSOIDAE

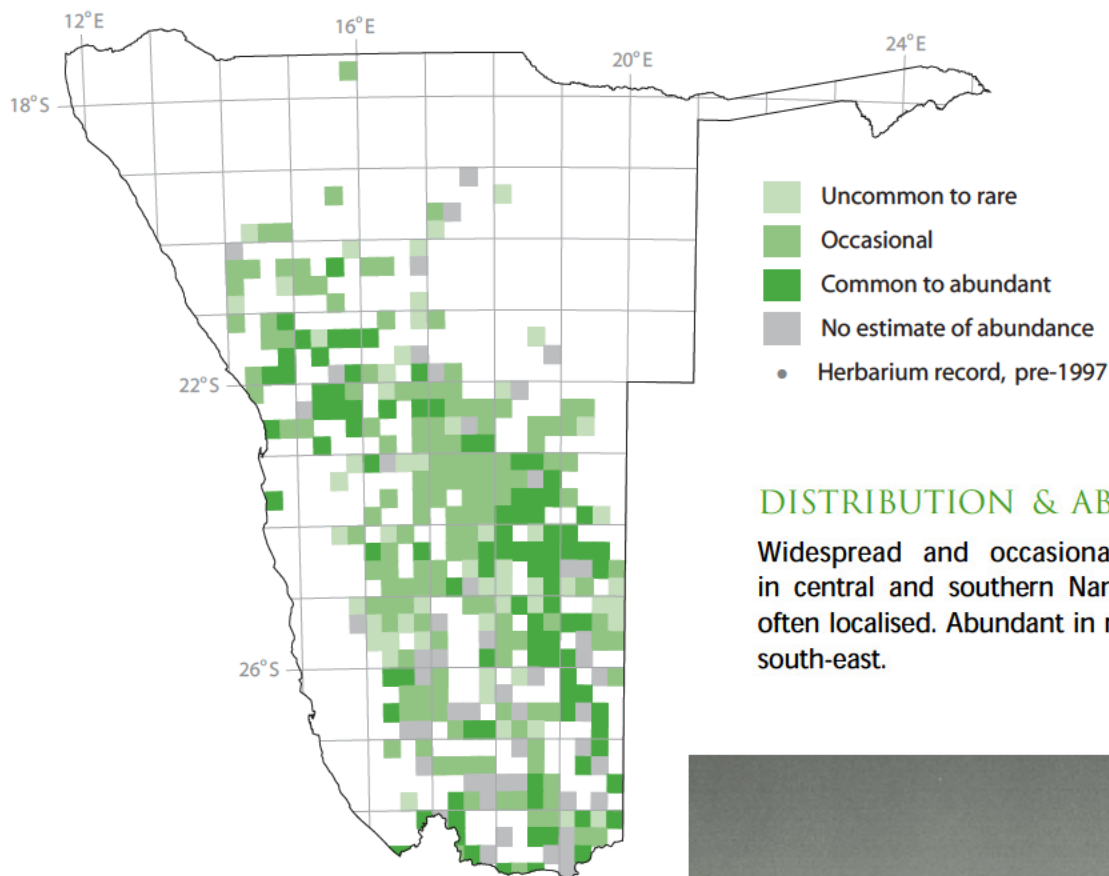
Mesquite

Origin: South-western USA

[812 records from 345 (32%) squares]

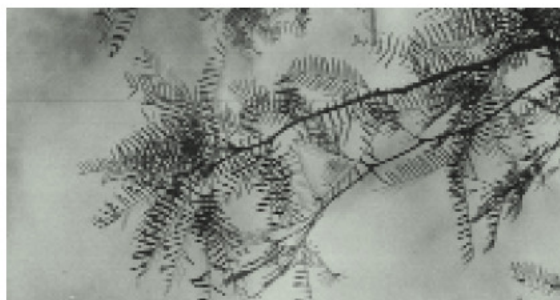
A shrub or multi-stemmed tree with a spreading canopy and **very strong spines**. LEAVES **twice-compound with small leaflets**. FLOWERS in **spikes; golden-yellow**. FRUIT a cylindrical or flattened pod, with seeds embedded in sweet, floury tissue.

There are at least three species in Namibia, the most common of which is *P. glandulosa*. All three are discussed together. *Prosopis* can be confused with *Acacia*, but has straight spines rather than thorns.



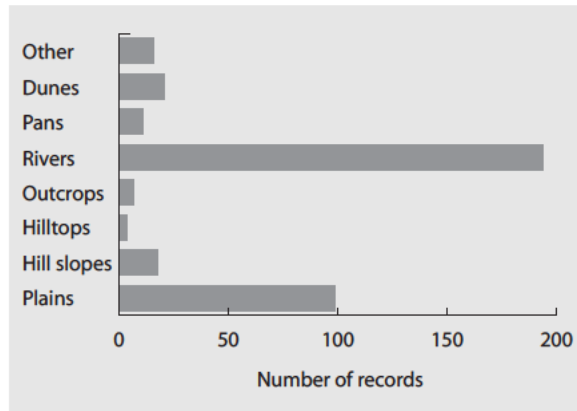
DISTRIBUTION & ABUNDANCE

Widespread and occasional to common in central and southern Namibia, although often localised. Abundant in riverbeds in the south-east.

Prosopis sp., L. Hoffmann

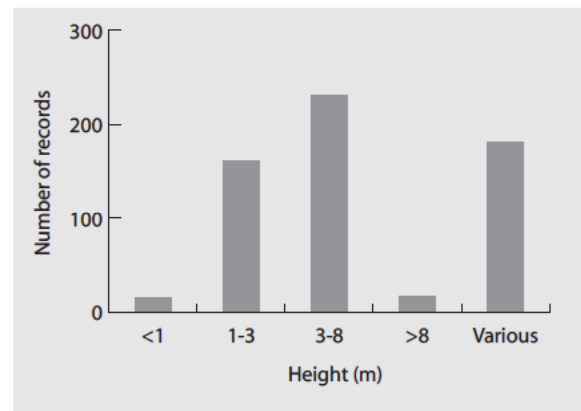
HABITAT

Mostly found in riverbeds and along dry watercourses; also along road verges, at home-steads, and livestock kraals and cattle posts.



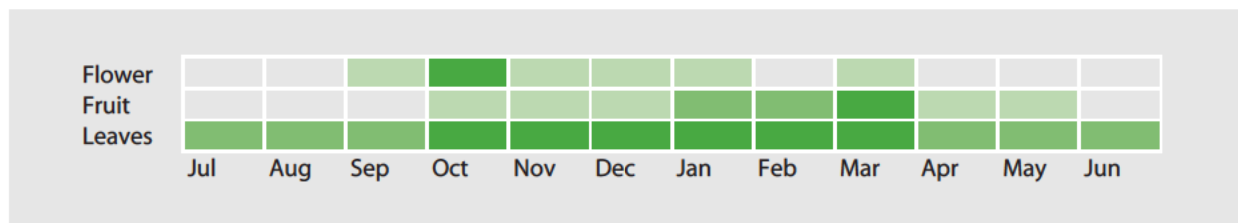
GROWTH FORM

Generally a tree in the 3–8-m height class, but also a shrub of 1–3 m; numerous groups of plants of various heights recorded.



ANNUAL CYCLE

FLOWERS mostly October, continuing to March some years. FRUIT mostly January to March. LEAVES some all year round, but mostly October to March.



GENERAL

An aggressively invasive species that is out-competing indigenous species, especially *Acacia erioloba* and *A. karroo*, in many of the south-eastern flowing rivers and the Klein Windhoek River just north of Windhoek. The pods are highly nutritious and the wood makes good firewood. The plants coppice easily and provide good shade. The spines are lethal to tyres. These plants produce masses of pollen in spring to which many people are extremely allergic, sometimes with near-fatal effect.

Apparently there are species of *Prosopis* that are not invasive and could be used for shade (HOF1), but few people can tell the difference and generally plant the wrong species. Thus, it is better not to plant any. The City of Windhoek has a by-law prohibiting the planting of any of these species.

In the Northern Cape, projects utilising *Prosopis* spp. have been successful at creating jobs and reducing populations of these species.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

This species is a threat to indigenous vegetation, particularly in the riverine habitats in the south-east.