

Spirostachys africana

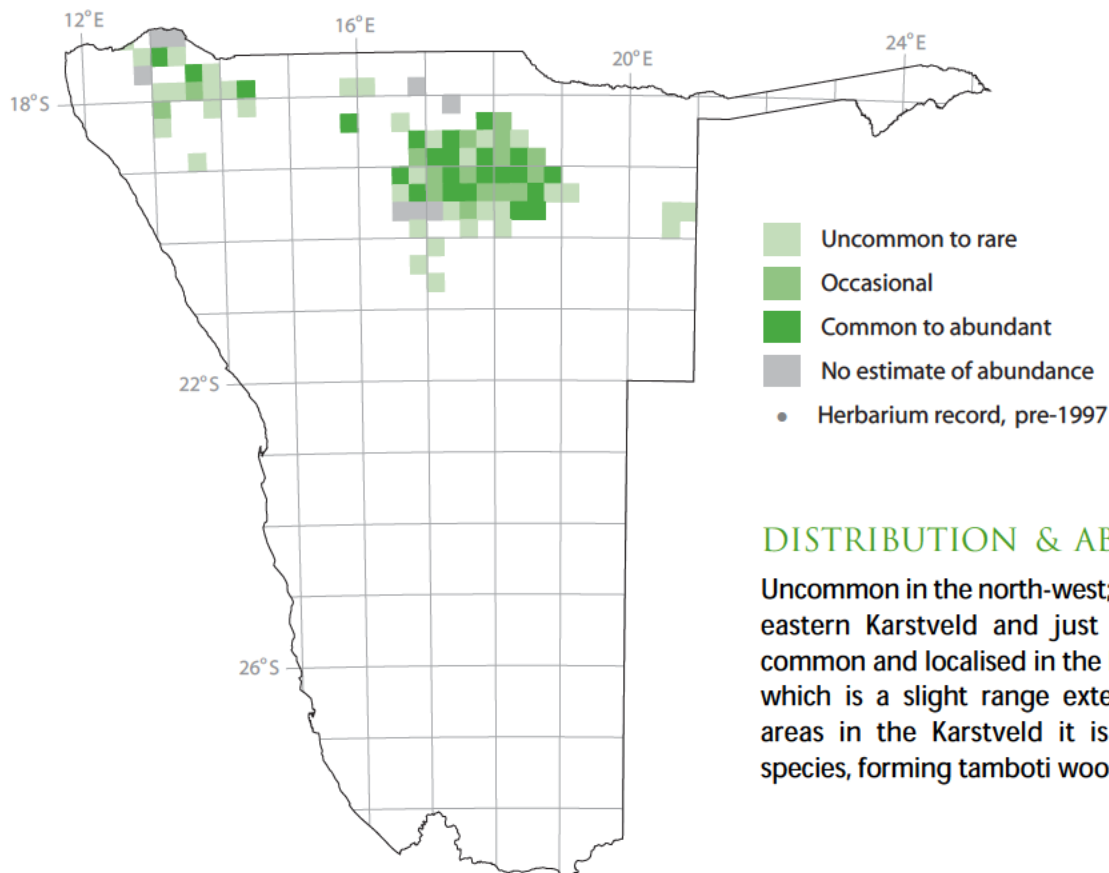
Tamboti

Tambotie (A); Tambuti (G);
omuhongo (O); muhongo (Rk, Ruk)

[254 records from 83 (8%) squares]



Erect tree with spreading crown, and **milky latex**. BARK grey to dark grey, **longitudinally fissured to form small, rectangular blocks**; **young branches drooping**. LEAVES simple, ovate to elliptic; **margin crenate**. INFLORESCENCE an axillary spike, densely covered with brown bracts. FRUIT a three-lobed, three-seeded, yellow-brown capsule, about 10 mm in diameter.

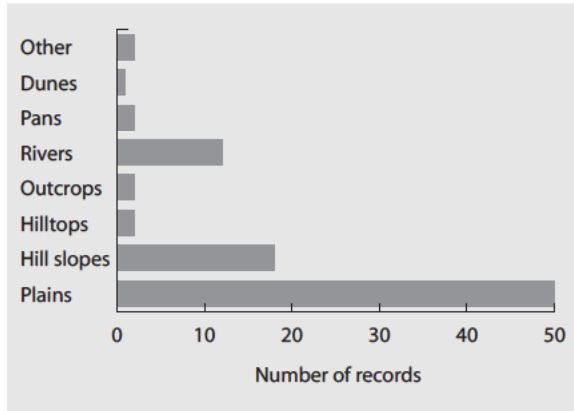


DISTRIBUTION & ABUNDANCE

Uncommon in the north-west; common in the eastern Karstveld and just east of it; uncommon and localised in the Nyae Nyae area, which is a slight range extension. In some areas in the Karstveld it is the dominant species, forming tamboti woodlands.

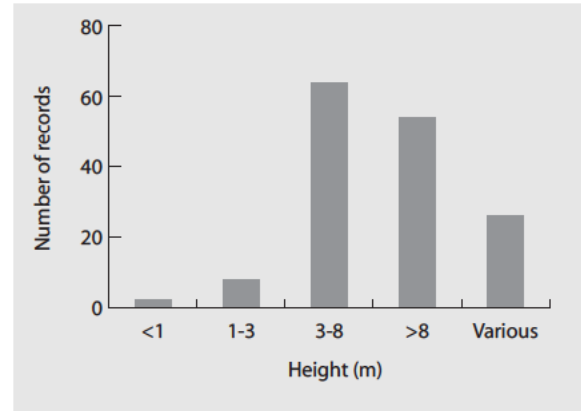
HABITAT

Mainly found on plains in the north-east and Karstveld, as well as on hill slopes in the Karstveld; occurs along dry river courses in the north-west. Grows on sand, calcrete, dolomite or other rocky substrates.



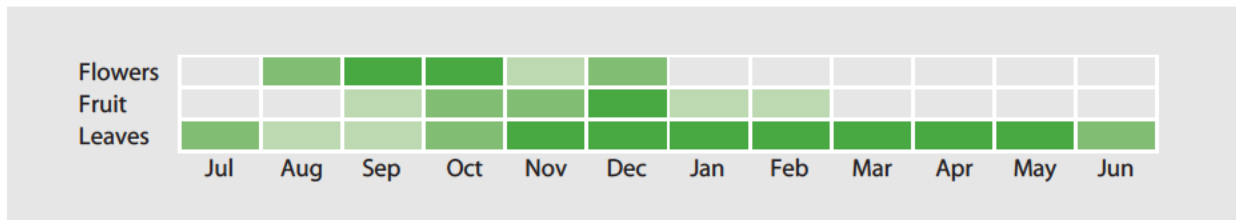
GROWTH FORM

A tree in the 3–8-m height class or taller. Young trees recorded in degree squares 1817 and 1917.



ANNUAL CYCLE

FLOWERS August to December. **FRUIT** September to February, peaking in December. **LEAVES** mainly October to June, with young leaves in November and December.



GENERAL

Graceful tree of horticultural potential. The wood is hard, termite resistant and used for fencing, furniture and house construction, as well as for smaller items such as decorative walking sticks and beads. The wood should not be used as firewood because the smoke is irritant and may cause nausea or taint the food cooked over the coals. The wood is nevertheless sometimes burnt to obtain the aromatic smoke; and torches are made from the branches. The stems and bark are used to produce fish-poison and poison for application to arrowheads; the leaves and latex are used medicinally, although this is said to be dangerous. Powdered wood is used by Herero women as perfume.

The leaves, shoots and twigs are browsed by giraffe, kudu and dik-dik; tree squirrels eat the bark, new leaves, pollen and seeds and nest in holes in the tree-trunk. The seeds are known as 'jumping beans'; they are often infested with the larvae of a moth, which move, causing the seed to 'jump about'.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

About 5% of the big trees in 1918AD have died. Formerly, tamboti was used to make props for the mine in Tsumeb and, although there is no documented evidence, may have been over-utilised in the area west of Otavi. Protected by forestry legislation.