

EDIBLE PLANTS

Although the edible fruits may be refreshing, even thirst-quenching, and add balance to your diet, many of them have an astringent effect and are of limited food value. Further, in most cases they are to be found only towards the end of the rainy season. For bulk in your vegetable diet, you are advised to look in preference for the edible roots and African spinaches which have a wide distribution and are available throughout the year.

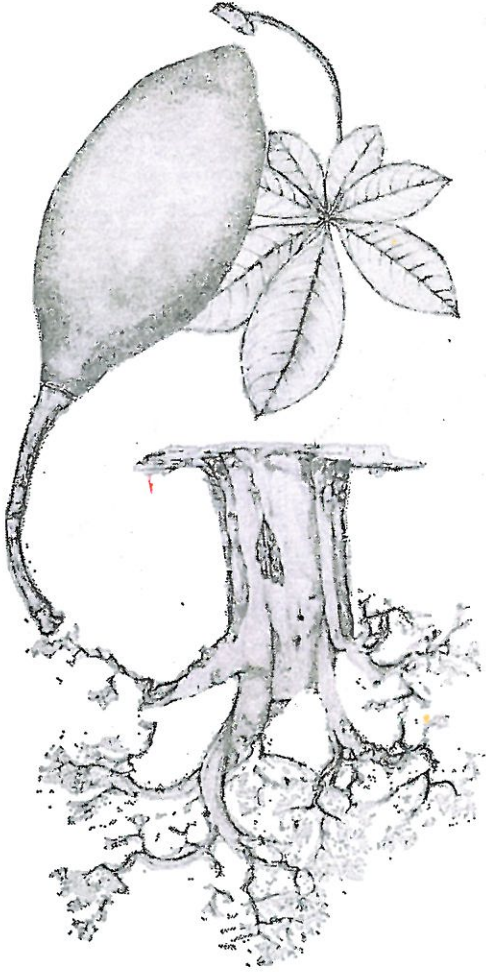
Adansonia digitata—Baobab, cream of tartar, kriemetat boom, umkomo (N), muUyu (S), (see page 100).

The baobab is a large tree with a smooth, brown bark and stiff branches found in the hot, low rainfall areas. It may grow up to 70 ft. high and have a diameter of 24 ft.; the swollen trunk of a well-grown tree is familiar to most Rhodesians though the slender young leaf-clad tree is not so well known. The alternate, bright green leaves are divided into 5-7 leaflets borne on long, brownish, grooved stalks; each leaflet may be three to five inches long but the centre one is always the largest. The large white flowers appear in October or November and, while attractive, smell of meat extract and are probably fertilised by "bluebottle" flies.

The hard-shelled fruit is carried on a long stalk and may be six inches long by four inches in diameter; a velvety grey-green shell covers a dry, whitish pulp, astringent but refreshing, especially when pounded and mixed with water; embedded in the pulp is a number of dark seeds which are pleasantly acid and refreshing to suck and may be roasted and ground to make "coffee".

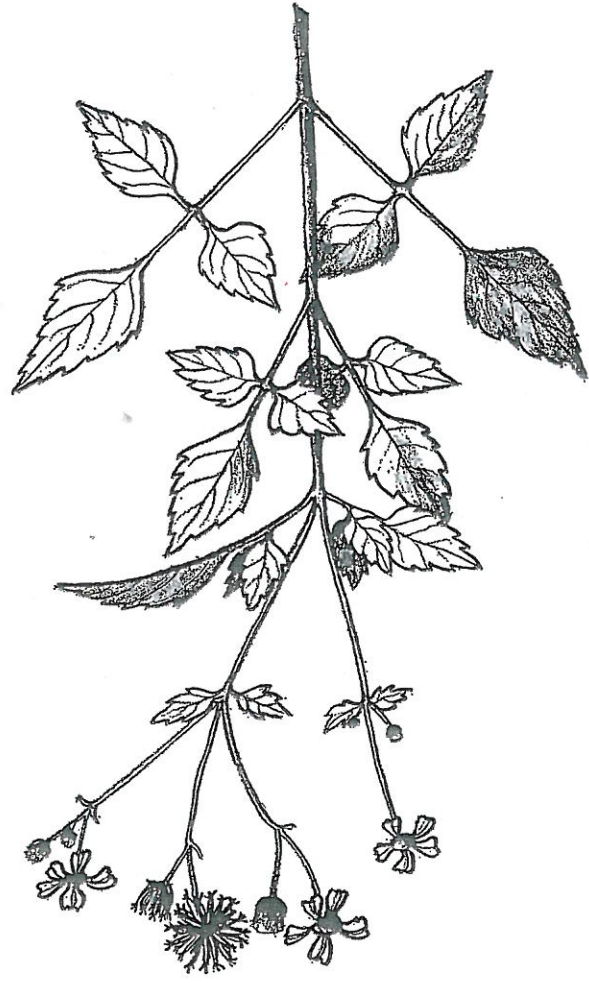
The fresh leaves are boiled and eaten as a vegetable and pieces cut out of the trunk provide a little moisture if chewed; water often collects in the hollows which form in the bole.

The fruits contain very high concentrations of Vitamin C which makes them even more desirable to those with an unbalanced diet. The entire young plant can be eaten, and the bark of the sapling can be used for making a good rope. It will be plain that this tree is one of the most useful which can be found by anyone with a survival problem.

Adansonia digitata

Bidens pilosa—Black jack, Mhuvuyu (S), Nyamaradza (Zezuru), (see page 101).

This is a very common annual weed. The leaves are usually divided into three leaflets, each up to one and a half inches long, stalked, spearhead-shaped and with irregularly toothed margins; undivided leaves are not uncommon. Flower heads have a yellow centre, sometimes surrounded with white rays. Seeds with two to four barbs at the apex. The cooked leaves are a good substitute for spinach.



Bidens pilosa

Brachystegia boehmii—Prince of Wales feathers, *umTshabeta* (N), *muFute* (S), (See page 102).

The dominant tree in most parts of Rhodesia between 3,500 and 4,000 feet, but occurring also at higher altitudes, it may grow to a height of 40 ft. with a trunk diameter of two feet but is usually much smaller. The bark is irregularly furrowed, rough and grey.

The leaves are copper coloured or green when young, divided into oblong leaflets in 14-24 pairs, so close together as to overlap and almost stalkless, oblong and slightly tapering; at the base of the leaves there is often a pair of kidney-shaped leaf-like appendages up to two inches long. The flowers are rather inconspicuous but have long white anthers and appear between September and December. The fruit is a flat, smooth, brown seed-pod appearing between May and June.

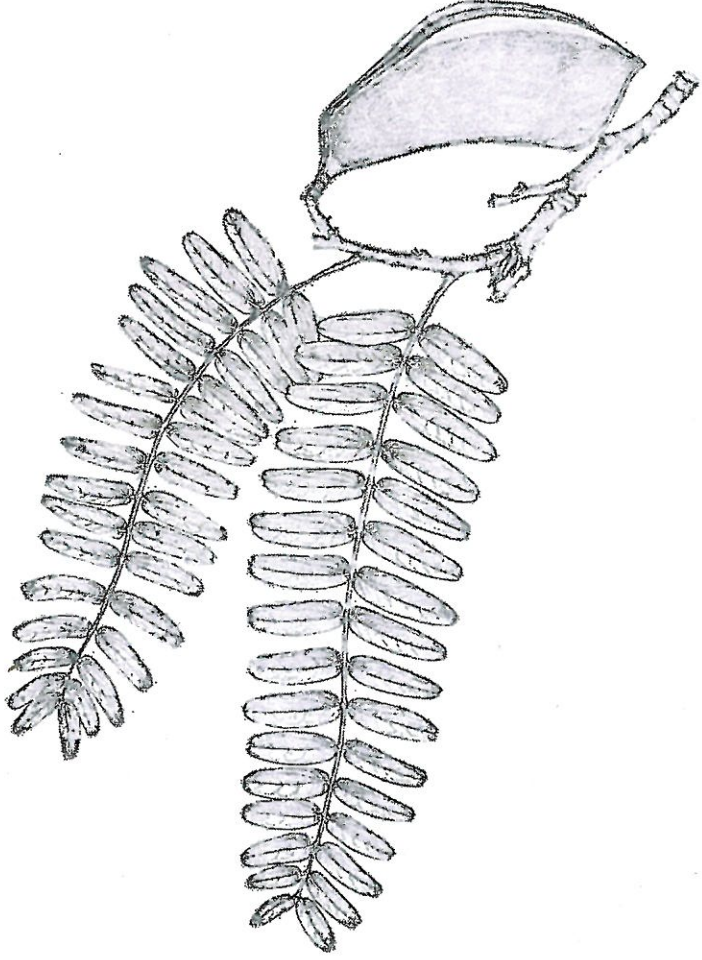
The tree provides a very good rope bark which is most durable and may be used for making fishing traps; the bark is stripped in long, narrow lengths, then alternately chewed and rolled until it is soft and pliable.

The inner bark is quite tasty and will stave off thirst on the march.

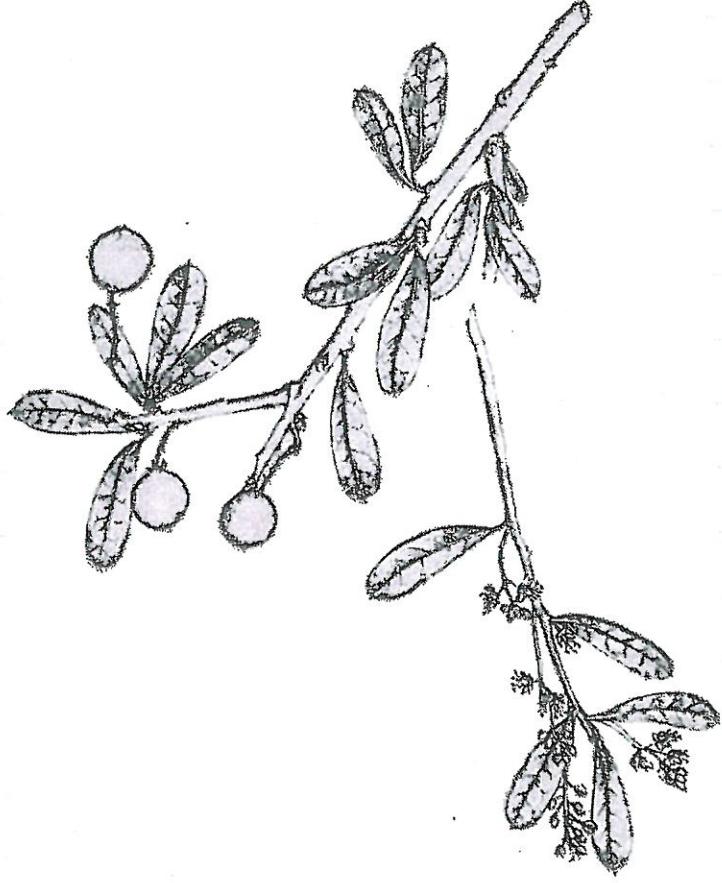
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Brachystegia boehmii

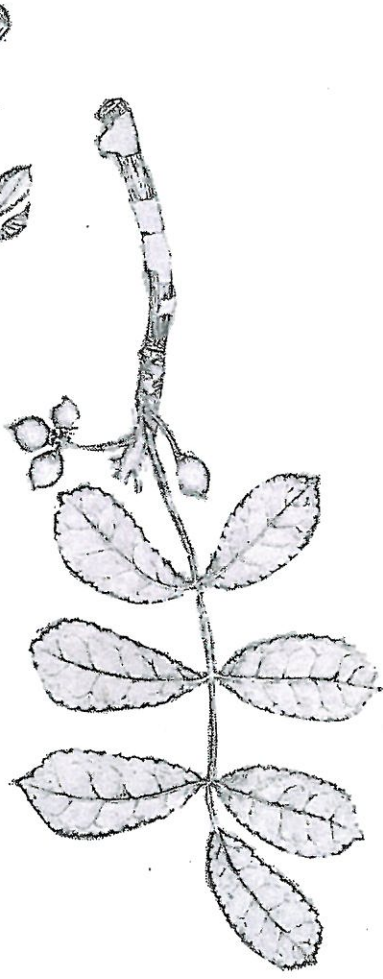


Boscia albitrunca—Witgatboom, umBombwe (N), muTobi, mUDowe (Gwanda dialects), (see page 103). This is a small tree found mainly in the Southern lowveld and Matabeleland. It has a whitish trunk which, with its compact, rounded head, makes it easily recognisable at a distance. The inch to inch and a half long leaves are alternate, leathery, grey-green, oblong and crowded at the end of the branches; leaf stalks are short and the midribs are channelled above and prominent below. The flowers are minute, the fruits round, the size of a small cherry and though edible are slimy and have a sickly sweet taste. However the roots (muTiri) can be pounded and made into porridge, roasted and used as a coffee substitute or boiled for a long time to make syrup.



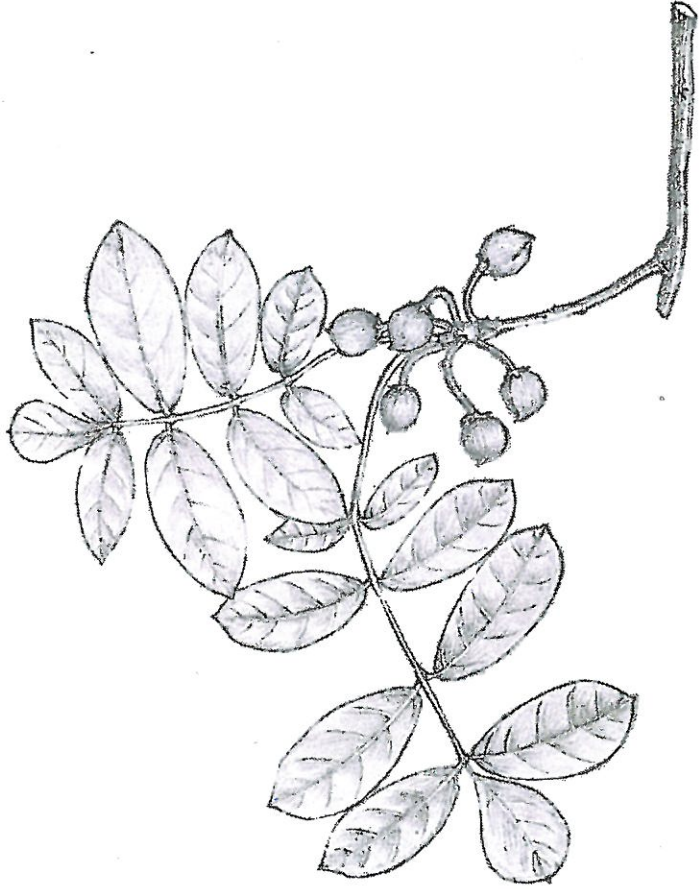
Boscia albitrunca

Commiphora marlothii—Paper bark tree, Quogodo (N), (see page 104).
A tree commonest in the hotter and drier parts of Rhodesia, common too on granite kopjes in Matabeleland and the North-West of the country. It is easily recognisable by its bark which flakes off in large, light golden-yellow sheets and comes off in twigs also like yellow paper, leaving a smooth, green under-bark. The leaves, up to eight inches long and bunched at the end of thick twigs, are each divided into 5-9 hairy and almost stalkless, oblong, scalloped leaflets, woolly below, where the midrib and veins show clearly.
The small whitish male and female flowers appear on separate trees in November and December before or with the young leaves, followed by round, one-seeded fruits. The edible roots are quite palatable raw.



Commiphora marlothii

Commiphora mollis—imiNyela (N), (see page 105).
 A smallish, attractive, leafy tree with a round, much-branched crown found in the lowveld and throughout the hotter and drier types of woodland; common in river valleys at the lower altitudes. It has a smooth, brown or dark grey bark, sometimes mottled with circular patches of lighter colour about the size of a half-crown; the trunk is often roughly four-sided or furrowed. Leaves are alternate, often in clusters on short branchlets and are compound of 7-9 leaflets; these are oval, grey-green in colour, about an inch long by half an inch wide and covered with silky hairs.
 The small, pinkish or yellowish flowers appear about the same time as the young leaves, in October or November. The fruit is round and green, about the size of a Cape gooseberry and consists of a single seed with a thin fleshy covering. The edible roots are tasty either raw or cooked.

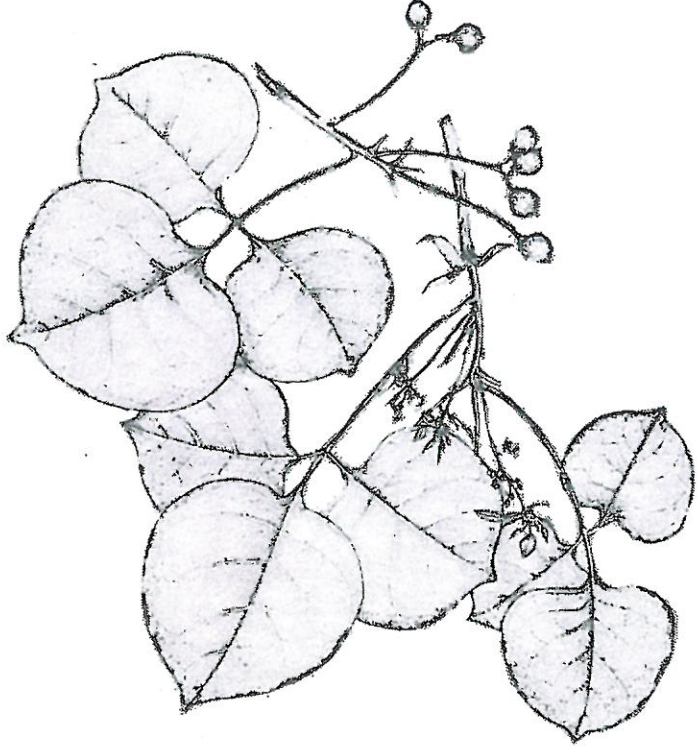


Commiphora mollis

Commiphora mossambicensis—Paper bark tree, iminyela (N), muLaswa (S), (see page 106).

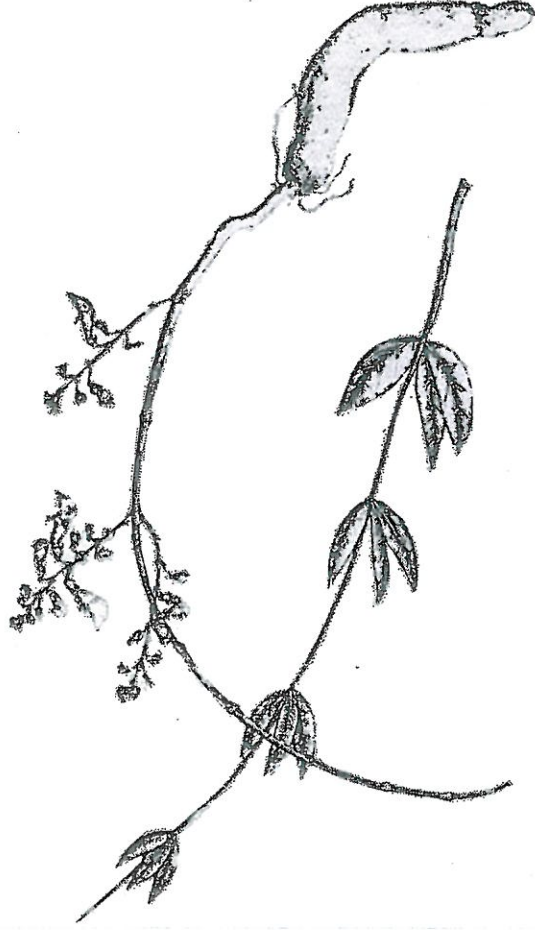
A shrub or small tree up to 18 ft. high, sometimes with suckers, found most commonly in the hotter, drier parts of Rhodesia; it is also found on both level and stony ground and its distribution reaches Salisbury.

Like *C. marlothii*, this species is found on granite kopjes; the bark is smooth, brown or dark grey, contains a resinous sap, and flakes off in yellowish patches with a papery texture. The alternate leaves are divided into three to five leaflets, usually clustered at the end of branchlets; the overall length of the leaf is up to six inches of which half is a thin stalk; leaflets are as broad as they are long, tapering to sharp points, and are fringed with fine hairs; there are conspicuous veins and midribs, especially on the undersurfaces of leaflets; leaves go brown and fall off after the rainy season. The small, yellowish-white flowers appear, male and female on separate trees, at the end of the dry season with the new leaves. The round, fleshy fruit is the size of a cherry with one large seed with an orange-red covering at its base, gripping the seed by four narrow arms. The edible roots are palatable raw or cooked.



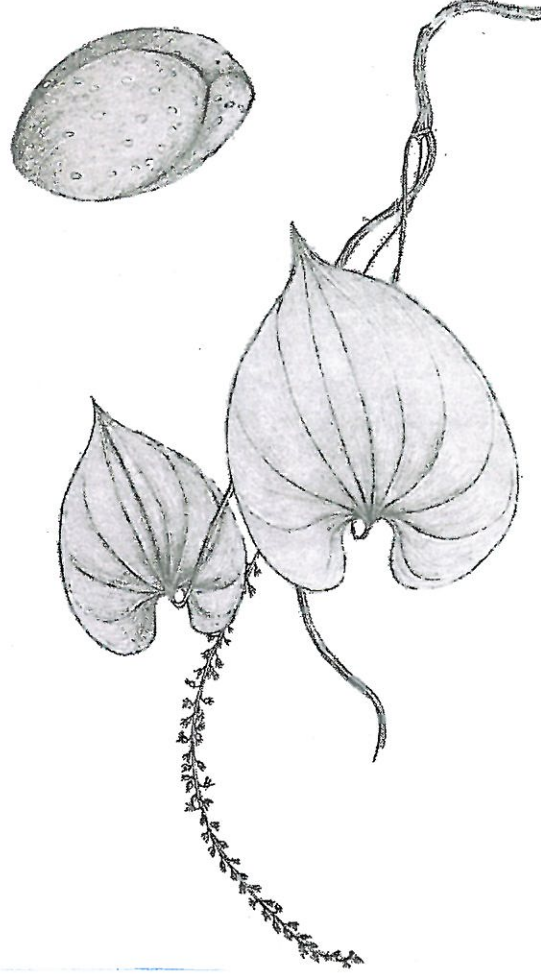
Commiphora mossambicensis

Coleus esculentus—African potato, scrambled egg, Tsenza (S), (see page 107).
 A perennial found all over Rhodesia, often on stony ground. It has stems two to three feet long, arching over. The leaves are opposite, nearly stalkless, roughly oblong, more or less scalloped, covered with soft hairs on both surfaces. Clusters of bright yellow flowers are borne in the leaf axils on the bare stems remaining from the previous year; another form of this species, with erect stems and leaves, and flower clusters in whorls of three, is not distinguished by the African under separate names. The root is an artichoke-like, edible tuber which is tasty either raw or cooked.



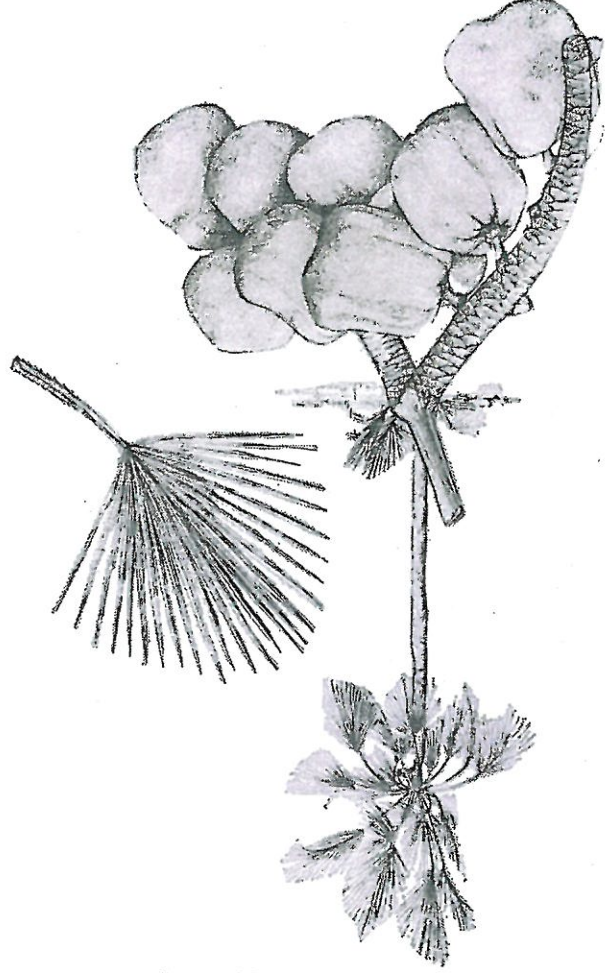
Coleus esculentus

Dioscorea bulbifera—Air potato, IDiya (Ndan), (see page 108).
This is a fairly common climber with slender stems and alternate, hairless, heart-shaped leaves with about nine veins arising from one point at the base. The stems bear aerial, kidney-shaped, brown tubers which are edible.



Dioscorea bulbifera

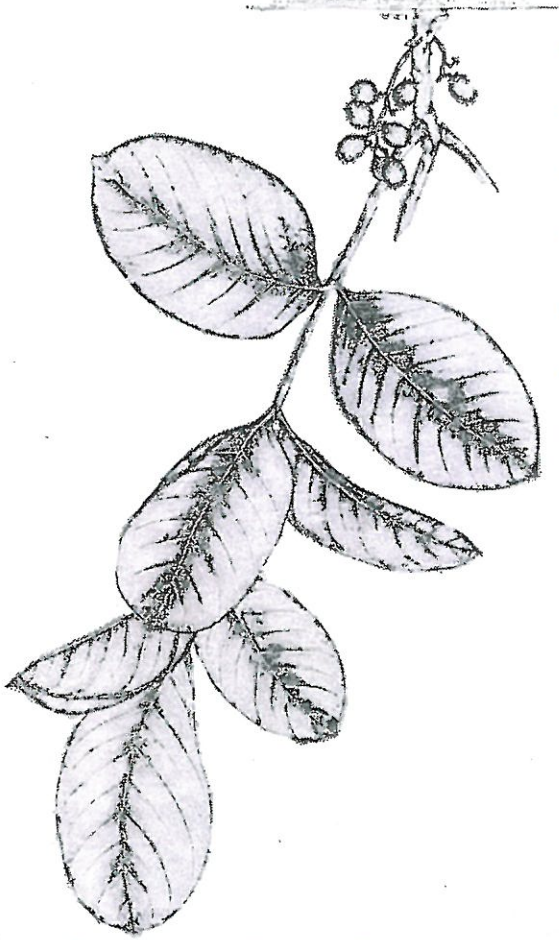
Hyphaene ventricosa—Gingerbread palm, fan palm, vegetable ivory, Ilala (N), mURara (S), Ngumba (Tonga), (see page 109). This is a slender palm up to 70 ft. tall, often in belts along lowland rivers but under less favourable conditions may be a small shrub with leaves arising at ground level. It has a smooth trunk sometimes slightly swollen above the middle, with the leaves at the apex, fanlike, composed of many narrow segments separated by fibres, the margins and upper sides of the veins rough to the touch.
The small flowers are borne on tapering branches in the leaf axils. The fruit is a hard, nearly spherical, polished brown nut about three inches in diameter, with a hard, ivory, onion-shaped seed. The sweet fibrous coverings make good chewing and elephant are very fond of them.
The apical buds or shoots are a useful source of food and a potent wine is distilled from the tapped sap.



Hyphaene ventricosa

Lamnea edulis—Wild grape, boomdruif, iTagabomvu (N), muTsambatzi, muHute (S), (see page 110).
A common perennial found everywhere in Rhodesia. Most of this dwarf shrub is underground in the form of a large, woody rootstock up to five inches in diameter; above ground there are only a few inches of branchlets bearing leaves; there may be a number of clumps of stems in a four to six foot radius, usually all growing from the underground branches of one plant.

Leaves follow the flowers and grow erect up to 16 inches long. They have from five to seven opposite, oval leaflets, almost stalkless and up to five inches long by two and a half inches wide, covered with dense reddish-brown hairs when young, particularly beneath.
The small, creamy-yellow flowers are borne in short clusters at ground level. The edible fruit is half an inch long, scarlet ripening to black. It has little flesh but is juicy and sour when red, sweet when black. The edible root must be cooked before eating.



Lamnea edulis

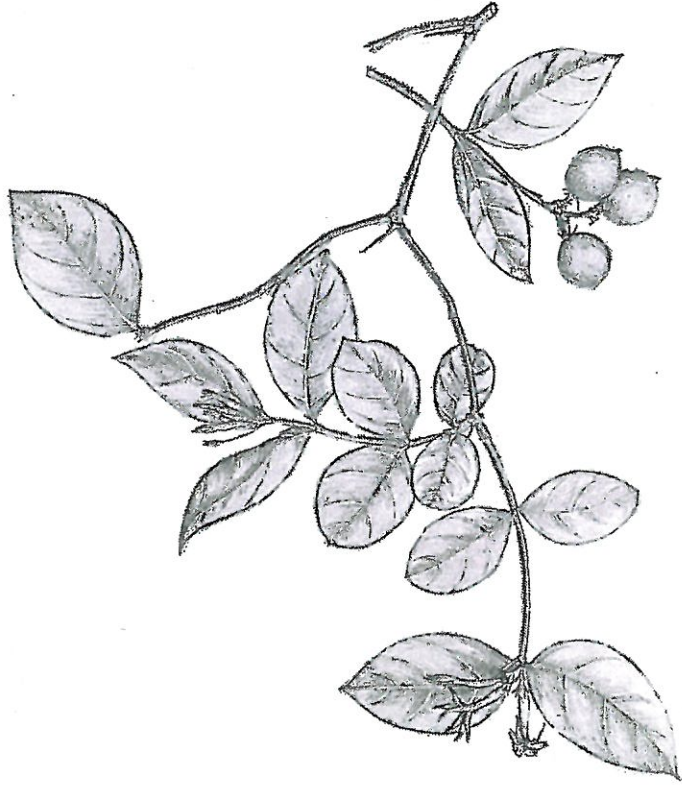
EDIBLE FRUITS

Carissa edulis—amaTungulu, umLungulu (N), muJabane (S), muMbingwa (Zezuru), muNzambara (M), muKavayomombe (Ndan), (see page 117).

A bush or small, rounded tree commonly found on ant heaps or in dense types of vegetation everywhere in Rhodesia. It has markedly forked branches with a pair of spines actually growing at many of the forks.

The leaves are opposite, the blades being somewhat heart-shaped with an unbroken margin, growing on every stalk; they are leathery and may or may not be covered with soft hairs. The stems or leaves are cut they release a milky latex. The tubular, pink and white flowers appear in clusters at the ends of the branches.

The fleshy, edible fruit is red, turning purplish-black when ripe; the milky, red pulp is sweet and pleasant to eat.

Carissa edulis

Diospyros mespiliformis—Rhodesian ebony, jakhals bessi,
umDhlausu (N), muChenje, muShuma (Zezuru), (see page
118).

This is an evergreen tree, very large in the lowveld along
rivers but smaller in the highveld where it is usually found on
termite mounds. The bark is rough, dark with small, quite
regular scales and when slashed shows a pink scar.

The short-stalked leaves are alternate, shiny and oblong,
rounded at both ends, three to six inches long by one to two
inches wide, sometimes with a wavy margin. Hairy, brown
flowers grow in the leaf axils. The round, yellow, tough-skin-
ned, edible fruit is borne in a large, shallow, five-armed cup;
the sweet, mealy pulp surrounds dark brown, shiny seeds to
which baboons and monkeys are partial.
Its common English name is derived from the very hard,
heavy, purplish wood.

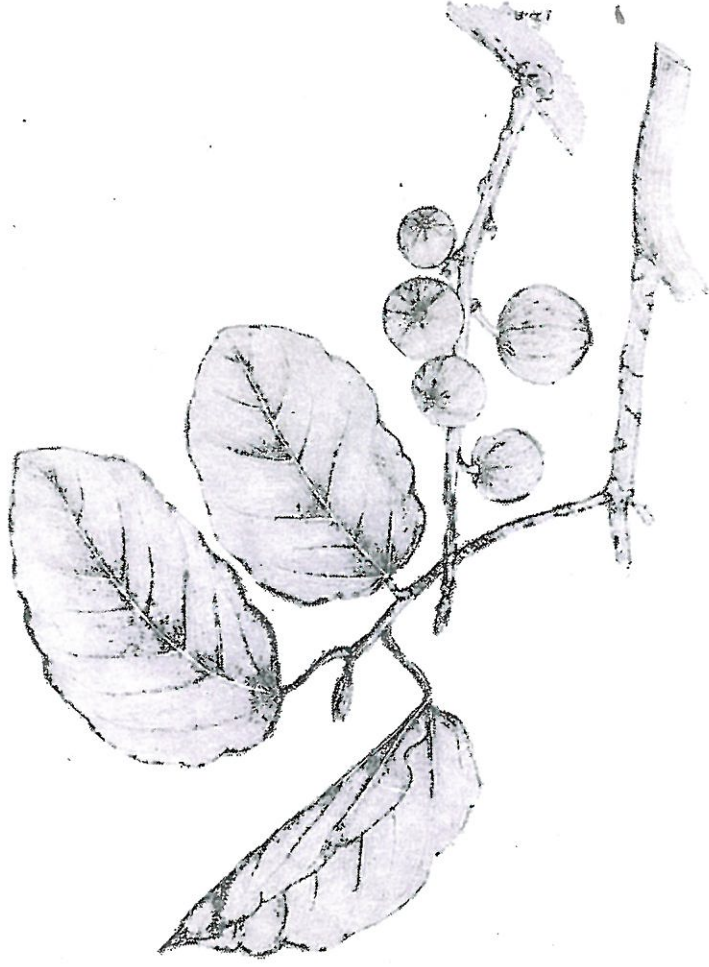
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Diospyros mespiliformis



Ficus capensis—Cape fig, groot vy, mu Wonde, mukuyu (S), mukowana (Ndan), (see page 119).
 The Cape fig is usually a short, rounded tree, though it may reach 40 ft. in height, and the trunk is usually about two feet in diameter. It has a milky sap and a smooth grey bark.
 The smooth leaves are alternate, heart-shaped with wavy and coarsely toothed margins, up to six inches long by three inches wide, sometimes hairy beneath, especially on the veins, and borne on stalks up to three inches long; leaves seem to shed throughout the year and it is not uncommon to see a leafless tree in midsummer or new leaves appearing in the winter.
 The smooth and fleshy figs are borne on leafless branches from the main stem, spherical or top-shaped, tapering abruptly towards the base; pinkish-green when ripe, sometimes with dark blotches; soft and tasty though often crowded with ants.



Ficus capensis

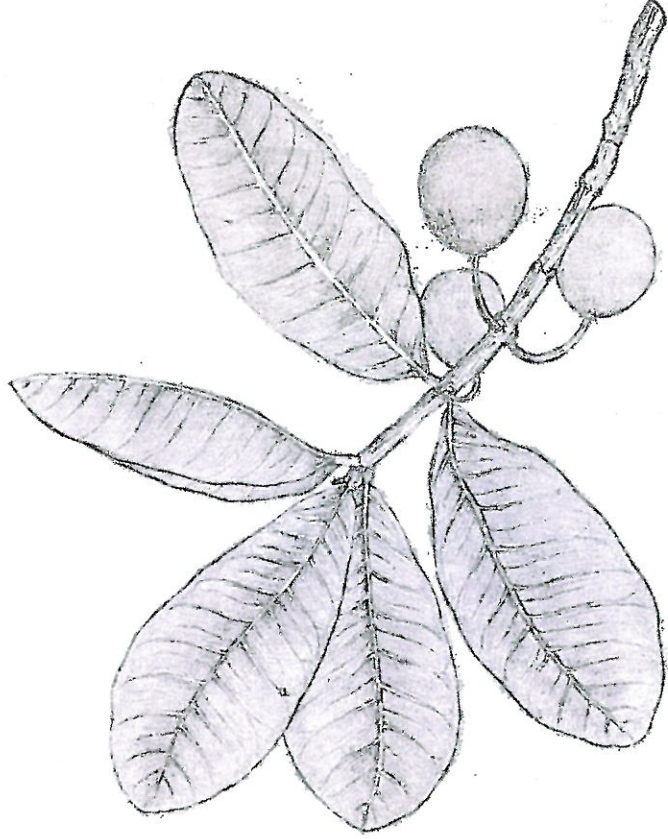
Flacourtia indica—Batoka plum, umQuokolo, maBota (N), muDendweya, muNhunguru (S), (see page 120). This may be a spiny shrub or small tree with rough, brownish bark. The leaves are carried on very short, pinkish stalks and may be alternate or clustered on the short branches, dark green in summer, reddish or purple-tinted in the autumn; they are rounded at the apex and narrowed gradually to the base, have a midrib prominent below, at least a partially toothed margin and may be hairy. The twigs may carry spines up to two inches long and sometimes leaves grow from the spines. The yellow male flowers cluster in the leaf axils; a few female flowers, small and greenish, grow singly in the leaf axils. The edible, fleshy fruit is a half to one inch diameter berry, red to purple when ripe, with several seeds in a pleasantly acid pulp.



Flacourtia indica

Garcinia livingstonei—African mangosteen, muRorongwe, Sina (Tonga), (see page 121).
 The African mangosteen is a medium-sized tree, common on the fringes of lowveld rivers, particularly in the Zambezi system. It is easily recognisable from a distance because of its stiffly branched, straight stems rising above the other riverine vegetation. The slashed bark and broken twigs and leaves produce a yellow latex.
 Branchlets and leaves are often in whorls of three; leaves are dark green, leathery and hairless, two to three inches long by one to two inches wide with short stalks and prominent veins beneath; they are wedge-shaped with unbroken margins. Cream-coloured flowers cluster on the second-year wood, particularly on the short lateral branches.
 The edible ripe fruit is an orange-yellow to red fleshy berry, up to three quarters of an inch long, containing between one and five seeds. It has a pleasantly acid taste and baboons, monkeys and night apes are especially fond of it.

Garcinia livingstonei

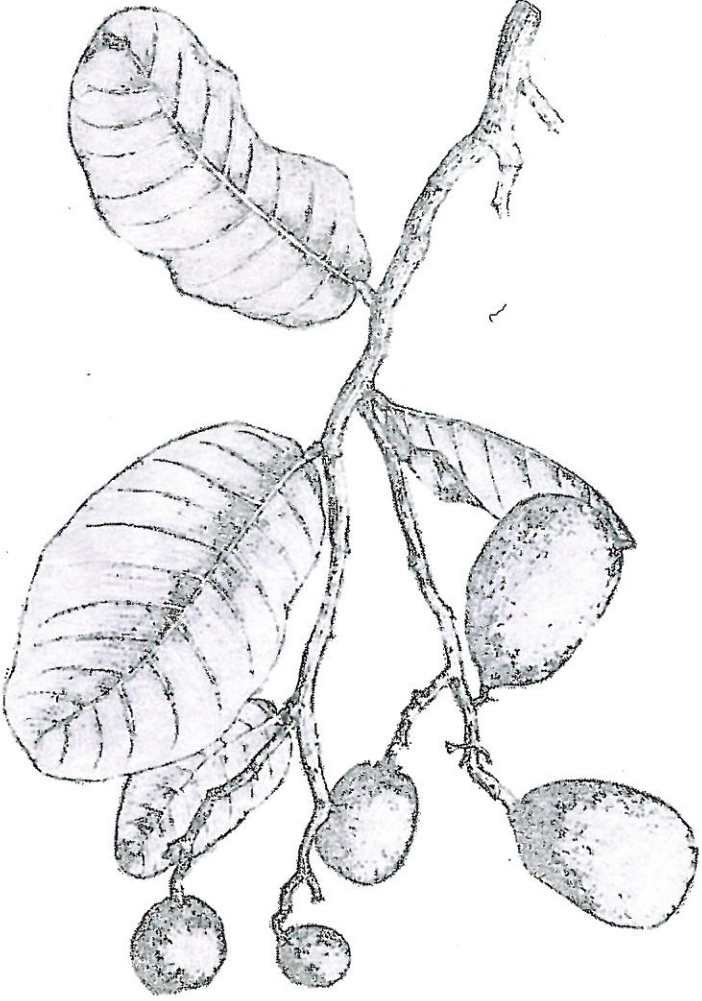


Parinari curatellifolia—Cork tree, hissing tree, Mobola plum, boomgyrappel, umKuna (N), muHacha, muChakata (S), muShakata (M), muMbuni (Ndu), mbula (Tonga), (see page 122).

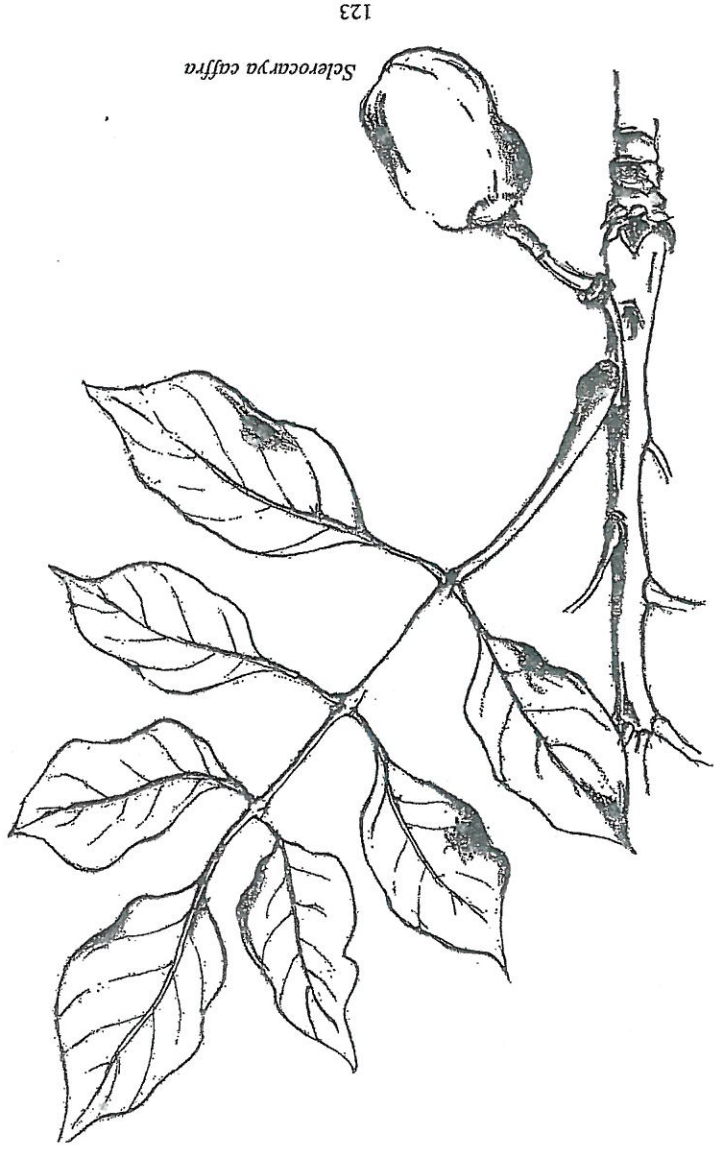
The Mobola plum is a common, medium-sized to large tree with a straight bole and a rough, dark, corky, deeply fissured bark which is however reticulated and often made thinner and blackish by frequent veld fires. It is usually found on sandy soils where water is fairly near the surface and is widespread throughout the high and middle veld.

It has a dense and rounded crown of dark foliage. The hard, leathery leaves are short-stalked, oblong with flat or wavy margins; the undersurface is pale and has prominent veins; the short, thick stalk is covered with dense, brown hair.

The sweet-scented, reddish-brown flowers bloom in dense clusters. The oval fruit is about an inch long, has a rough skin ripening to dull brown in early summer and has an acid-sweet, mealy pulp, which with the seeds is edible and contains much Vitamin C.

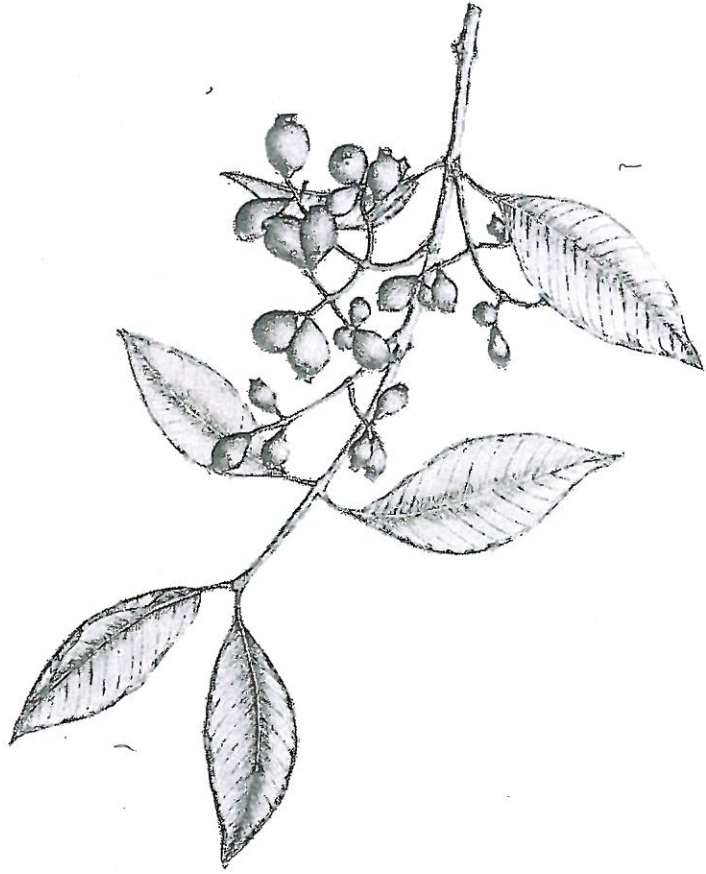


Sclerocarya caffra—Marula, iGanu, iKany, iMarula, muTsono, muPura (S), muFuna (Ndu), (see page 123).
A well-known, tall, deciduous tree, the Marula is common in the lowveld and Matabeleland, especially near Bulawayo and Plumtree but also fairly common in medium altitude areas such as around the Umtali and Fort Victoria areas. It has a rounded, spreading top and a thick, fairly smooth, grey bark which flakes in older trees.
The leaves are alternate, crowded at the ends of branchlets and divided into 7-13 leaflets on longish stalks; the leaflets are more or less oblong with tapering points, shiny above and paler and grey-green below. The yellowish or pinkish flowers are very small and appear in stiff clusters with the new leaves, mainly during October.
The fleshy, stoned fruit is two inches or more in diameter, spherical, pale green ripening to pale yellow early in the dry season, very juicy and tasting somewhere between a mango and a litchi; the nut within the stone is delicious.



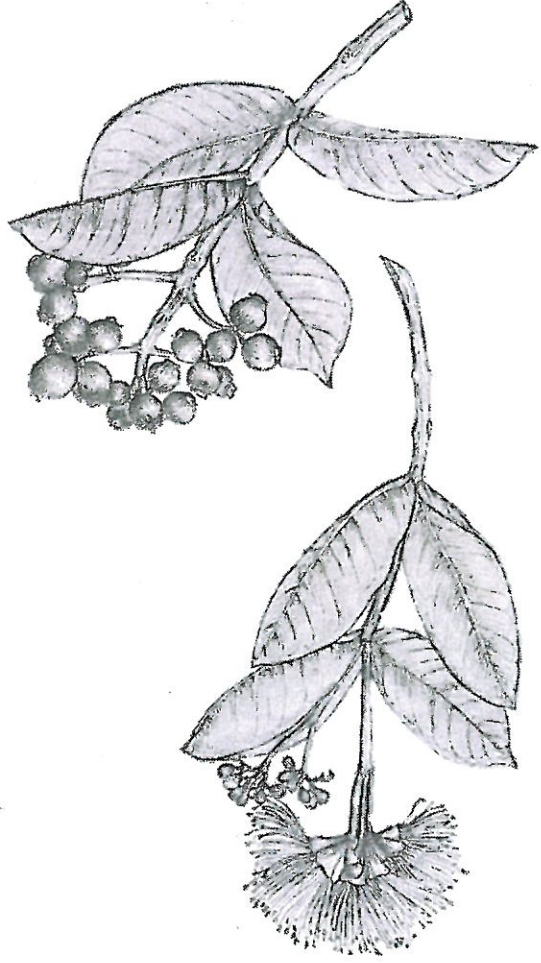
Sclerocarya caffra
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Syzygium guineense—Water tree, waterberry, waterboom,
 iGuali (N), mukute, muRgwi (S), chiMo, mukute-tembo (M),
 (see page 124).
 A medium-sized tree found along rivers and near springs all
 over Rhodesia. It has a grey or blackish bark.
 The leaves are opposite, elliptic, tapering to both ends, dark
 green, leathery and with gland dots which are clearly visible
 when the leaves are held up to the light. The edible, purplish
 fruit is the size of a small plum and has a very pleasant taste.



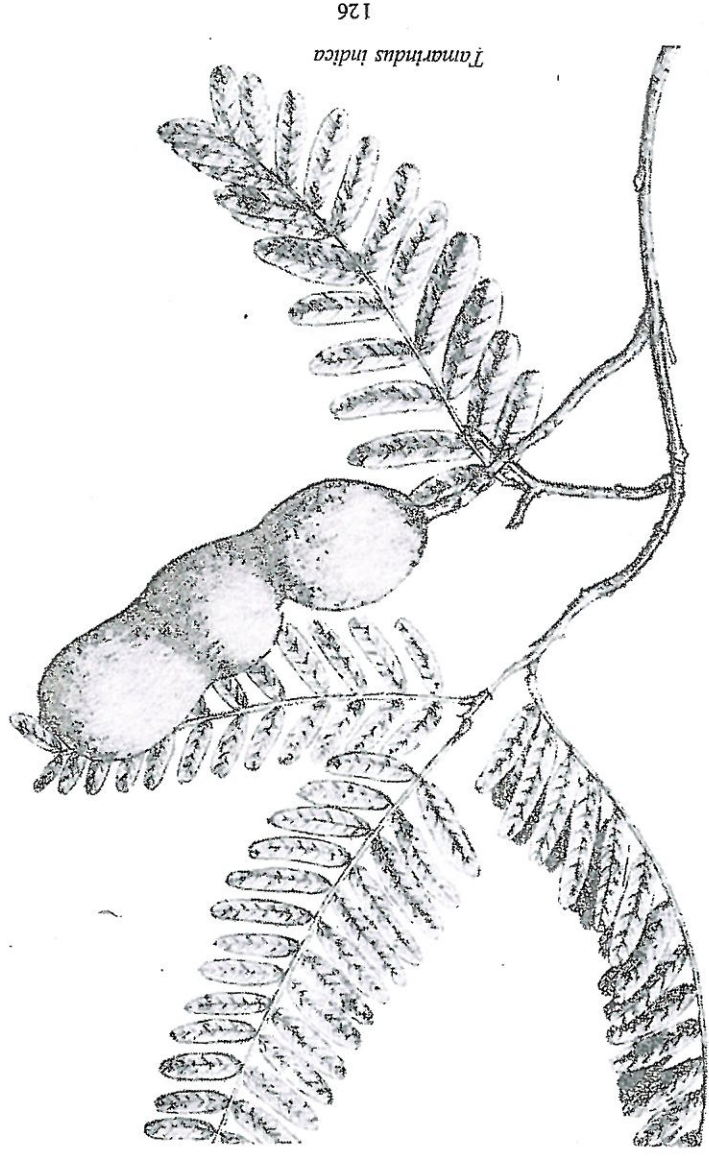
Syzygium guineense

Syzygium cordatum—Water tree, waterberry, waterboom, umDoni, umSwi (N), mukute-shenje (S), muNonyansisi (Tonga), (see page 125).
A tree of similar appearance to *S. guineense* and found also in damp places as a rule. It has a dense, dark green foliage. The apparently stalkless leaves seem to clasp the twig and are smooth and leathery, oblong with veins channelled above and prominent below; like *S. guineense*, the leaves have translucent gland dots. The edible fruit, too, is similar to that of *S. guineense*.



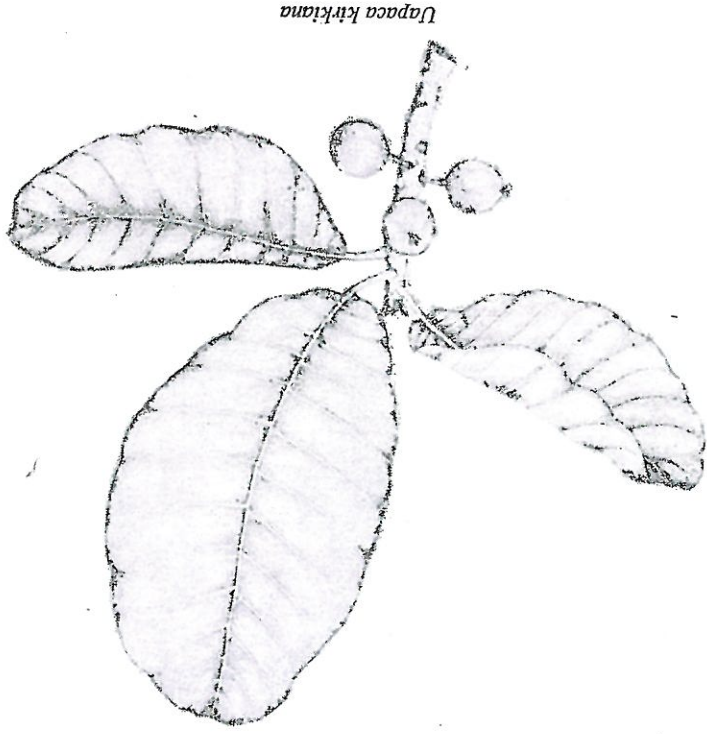
Syzygium cordatum

Tamarindus indica—Tamarind, muska, muska (S), (see page 126).
 The Tamarind is a handsome tree up to 70 ft. tall, found only in the Zambezi valley, usually near rivers in deep valley soils. It is a dark-looking tree with rough, dark grey, furrowed bark with a pink slash.
 The leaves are alternate and divided into 9-20 pairs of leaflets, each oblong, grey-green and up to an inch long by a quarter of an inch in width. When in bloom this tree is a mass of beautiful yellow or red-mottled flowers. The sausage-shaped fruit, up to five inches long, is fleshy, covered with a brown or grey shell. The edible, sticky, brownish pulp is eaten raw, tasting rather like sherbert but having a laxative effect. It tastes particularly good with curry.



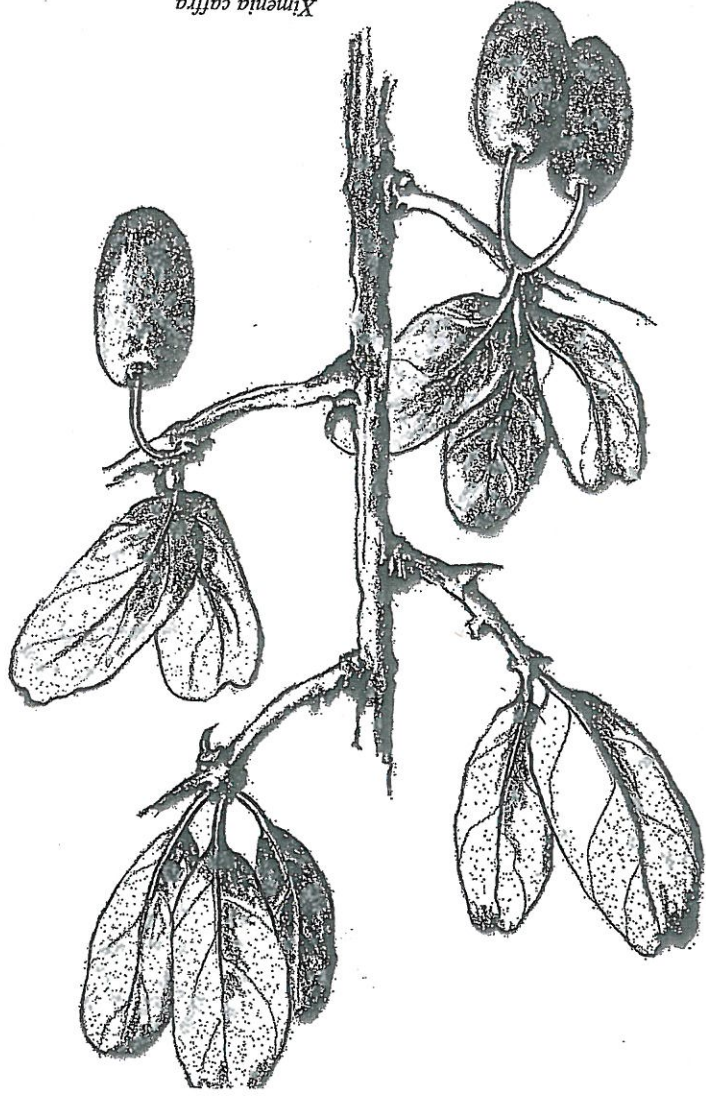
Tamarindus indica
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Uapaca kirkiana—Wild loquat, maHobohobo (N), muZhanje (S), muShuku (Karanga), muTongoro (M), (see page 127).
The maHobohobo tree is common on the Rhodesian plateau at altitudes between 3,000 and 5,000 feet. It is a small tree with a rough, dark grey, furrowed bark and rounded crown.
The large, dark green leaves are alternate and crowded at the ends of the branches; they are oblong with unbroken, wavy margins; up to eight inches long, they are borne on stiff, hairy stems; the undersurface has brownish hairs. The round, yellow-green flowers appear in close clusters on the old wood below the leaves.
The rounded, edible fruit, up to an inch and a half in diameter, is borne in clusters close to the stem and contains several whitish seeds; the fully ripe berries are brown and fleshy, juicy and very good eating; they ripen best if picked and kept in the dark for several days; the fruits are collected and sent for sale to markets in districts such as Matabeland where the tree does not grow.



Uapaca kirkiana

Ximenia caffra—Sour plum, suir prum, umTunduluka (N), muNhenzemi, muTswanzwa (Zezuru), (see page 128). This is a common and widespread shrub, often seen on termite mounds. The branches are thorny, the leaves and branchlets densely covered with reddish-brown hair when young. The short-stalked leaves are oblong, rounded at both ends, the upper surface dark green and shining, smooth when old, the undersurface often brownish hairy. The small white flowers appear singly or in close clusters on the short side branches. The ovoid or oblong, fleshy, stoned fruit is bright red when ripe and should be squeezed into the mouth, leaving the skin outside. The roots soaked in water produce an infusion said to cure bilharzia.



Ximenia caffra

POISONOUS FRUITS AND PLANTS

There are relatively few really poisonous fruits. In general, avoid fruits having smooth yellow or green skins and thorns on leaves or stems, dark purple fruits from plants with milky juice but no thorns, or fruits from plants growing carpet-like first taste of the central pulp is bitter and the fruits of plants having swollen roots may also be poisonous. Treat the various species of kaffir orange as suspect unless you are quite certain of the edible ones.

Acoканthepa oppositifolia—Bushman's arrow poison, (see page 134).

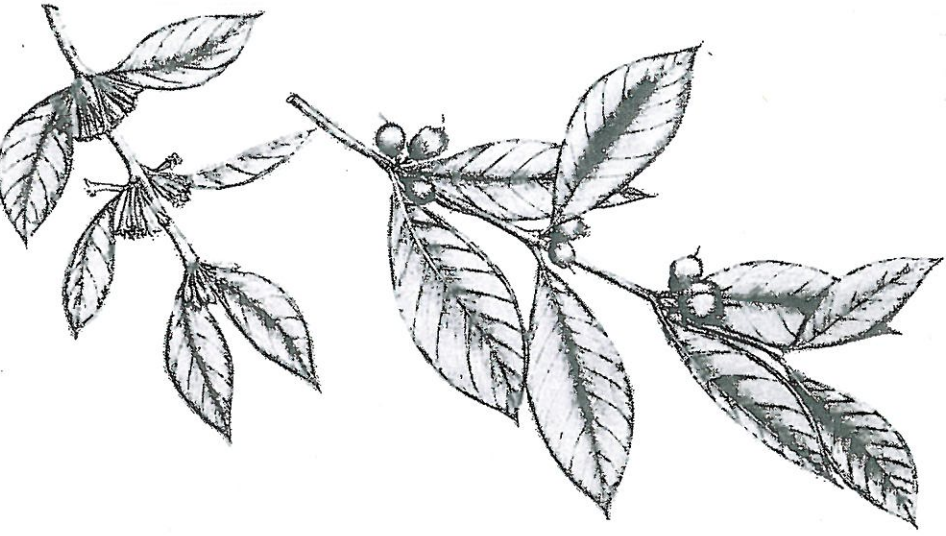
A rigid-looking bush or small tree, six to eight feet high, though not very common, it is found by streams or rivers and in Eastern District forests, sometimes on relatively dry sites such as the Matopos.

It has opposite, elliptic, evergreen leaves, each pair being at right angles to the next; the midrib is channelled above, prominent below and ends in a straight, sharp point; the leaf blade is smooth, leathery and glossy green, the edge thick and rolled back. Flowers are clustered in the axils of the leaves, tubular and pink without, white within.

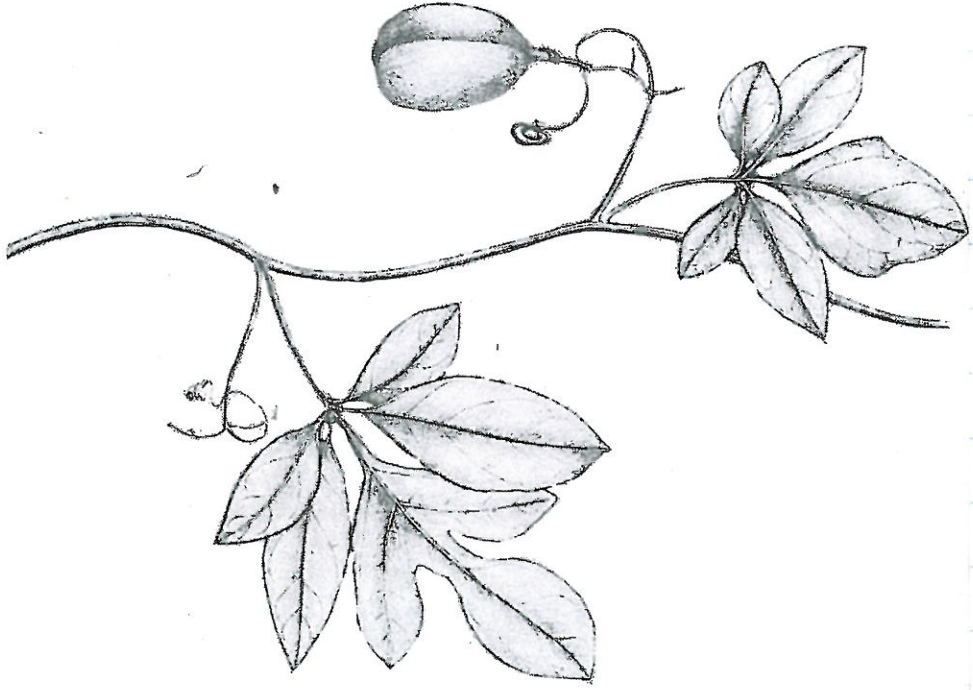
This shrub has a milky juice and no thorns. Its ripe fruit is purplish-black, egg-shaped and about half an inch long. The fruit is to be avoided and the sap is poisonous either swallowed or introduced into the blood stream through a wound.

Adenia senensis—Baboon poison, bobbajaangif, (see page 135).

This plant grows from a swollen, underground tuber which is sometimes partly exposed. Its slender, twining stems have tendrils from the leaf bases. Leaves are alternate, greyish-green and very variable in shape, but are more or less lobed and always have two glands at the base of the leaf on the stalk. The fruit is yellow to orange, oblong, about one and a half inches long by an inch in width and divided into three partly hollow compartments, each containing a soft, yellowish pulp in which are embedded reddish, pulpy-looking seeds. Despite its attractive appearance the fruit is known to have been responsible for several deaths.



Acoканthepa oppositifolia



Adenia senensis

Capparis tomentosa—mukanyengwe (N), (see page 136).
A spiny, climbing shrub, common in the lowveld and occasionally found on termite mounds in the highveld. Leaves are alternate, stalked and oblong-elliptical, rounded or notched at the apex, covered with grey down, especially beneath. The greenish-white flowers bloom singly in the axils or in loose clusters. The fruit has a hard brown shell, is round and up to an inch and a half in diameter. Although monkeys and birds eat this avidly, it is poisonous to humans.



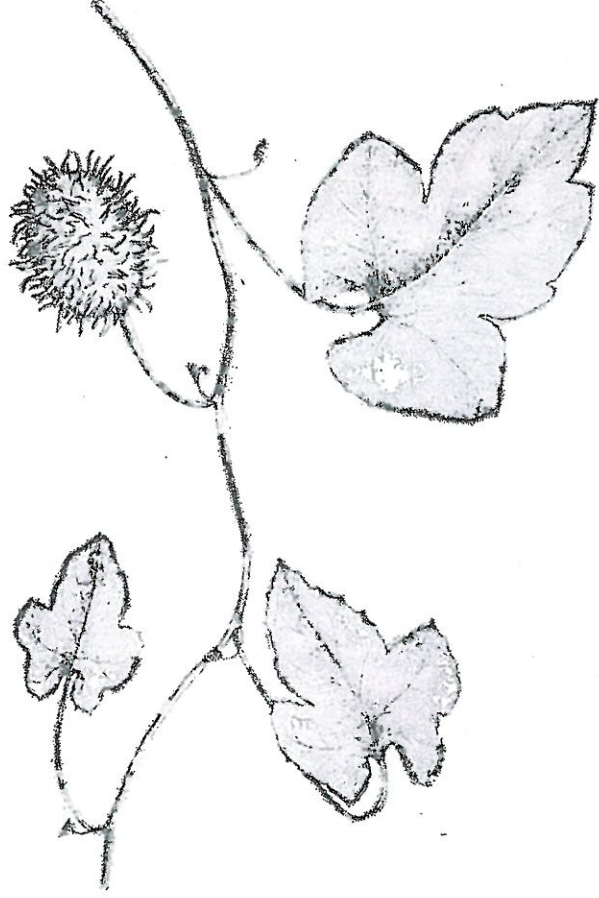
Capparis tomentosa

a) *Cucumis anguria*, variety *longipes*, (see page 137).
A slender-stemmed annual vine with dense white hairs on stems and leaves, which are in consequence rough to the touch. It is widely distributed throughout Rhodesia.
The leaves are alternate, with large, rounded lobes and two to four inches long, dark green and on stalks up to an inch and a half long; tendrils up to an inch long and tightly curled at the tips arise from the leaf bases. The ripe fruit is yellowish-green to light yellow, covered with soft, thick prickles and the size of a hen's egg. The translucent, green flesh smells like cut cucumber and is a valuable source of water. However, there are bitter-fruited varieties which are poisonous and for this reason this species appears among the poisonous fruits.

130

Cucumis anguria

137



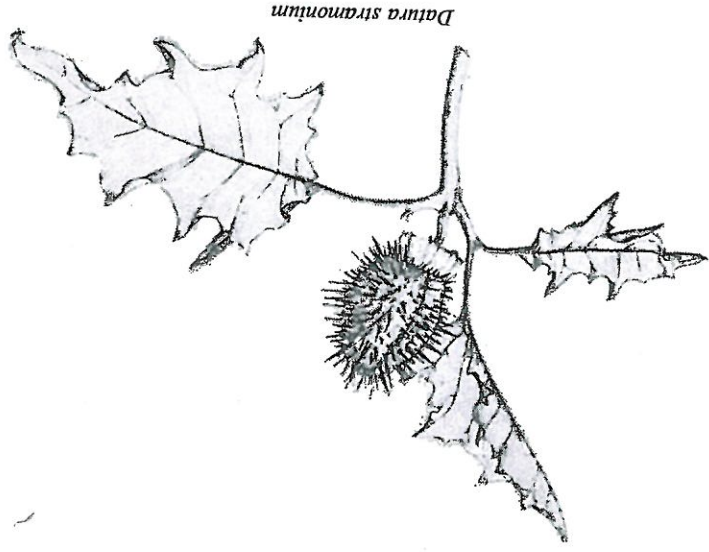
b) *Cucumis metuliferus*, Jelly melon, muTete (S), muGumudza mbwa (Zezuru), (see page 138). A tendrilled creeper, it is widely cultivated but is also common in old lands and on roadsides. In its wild form it is often a climber over bushes and trees.

The stems are angular and covered with stiff hairs, the leaves alternate and, like the stems, rough and hairy with three to five rounded or sharp lobes and irregularly toothed margins; at the bottom of the two-inch stalk a coiled tendrill appears. The flowers are yellow and resemble those of the cucumber. The fruits, when young, are dark, mottled green and covered with spines which are rather fleshy and not very hard; when ripe they are orange and about five inches long by two and a half inches in diameter. The rind is thin and the flesh green and translucent. Eaten raw or cooked, but the bitter strains are poisonous.

Cucumis metuliferus



Datura stramonium—Thorn apple, Jimson weed, stinkblaar,
Chohwa (S), (see page 139).
 A robust weed found in arable land or disturbed ground of
 any type. Growing up to four feet in height, it has alternate,
 heart-shaped to elliptic leaves, up to six inches long by five
 inches wide, with irregularly-toothed margins. Single flowers
 bloom in the leaf axils, with a tubular green outer covering and
 white to bluish trumpet-shaped petals up to three inches long.
 The fruit is a woody capsule, containing many poisonous seeds
 and covered with short, hairy spines.



Datura stramonium

Dichapetalum cymosum—Gifblaar, blaasgif, makgou, umk'auzan, Ncusane (N), (see page 140). This plant is frequently found at the edges of vleis or in savannah woodland, mainly confined to the Kalahari sand areas of Matabeleland to the North and North-West of Bulawayo. It is a ground plant having the main, woody portion underground. The plant may cover many square yards, seeming to consist of separate, crowded clusters of branches but in reality growing from a common root system. Stems are up to two feet high, reddish-brown and erect. Leaves are alternate, up to four inches long and one and a half inches wide, stalkless, smooth and leathery; the veins are prominent and loop before the margins; the young leaves are hairy but the hairs wear off with age. The flowers are small and greenish-yellow with inconspicuous, forked petals and are borne on very short flower stalks in the axils of the leaves. The round, orange-brown, ripe fruits are loquat-like in appearance, about an inch long and have a soft velvety skin containing two large seeds covered with a little flesh. Fruit and leaves are very poisonous. *Cucumis species*—Wild cucumber, wilde komkommer. Wild cucumbers grow well in dry regions, their fruits being adapted to water storage. Although many of the cucumbers are edible, bitter fruits do occur and these are poisonous.

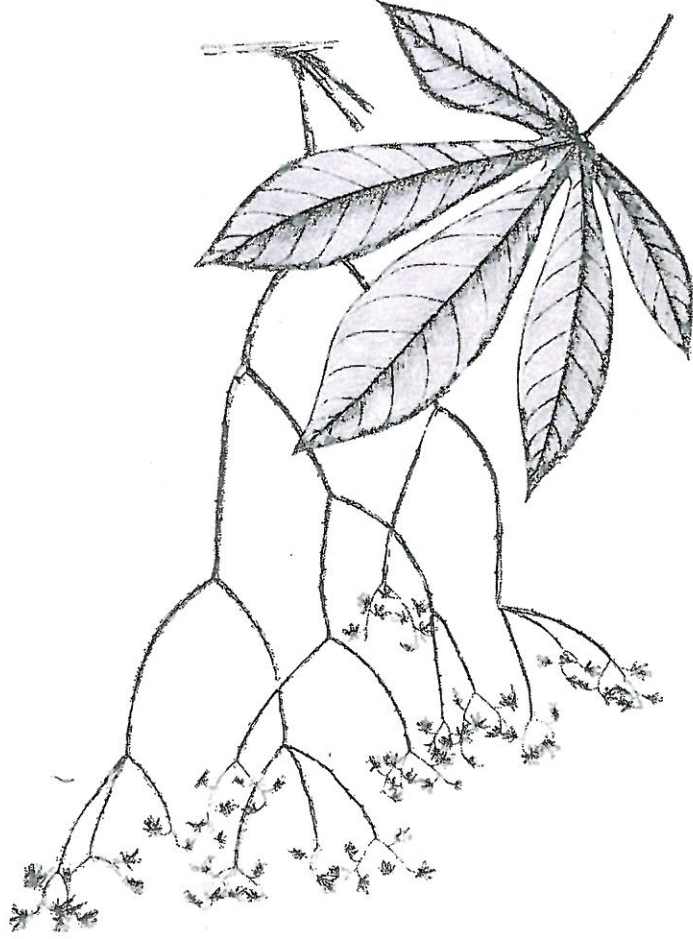


Dichapetalum cymosum

Manihot esculenta—Cassava, mufarinya (S), (see page 141). A widely cultivated plant frequently found growing around African huts throughout Rhodesia. The leaves are divided into 3-7 narrow, pointed leaflets up to six inches long. The small flowers grow in clusters. Both leaves and the long, tuberous roots contain a poisonous glucoside which releases prussic acid.

The tubers may be:

- a) peeled and boiled, then eaten after throwing away the cooking water,
- b) peeled and dried thoroughly, then ground into a meal or
- c) roasted thoroughly and ground into a meal.



Manihot esculenta

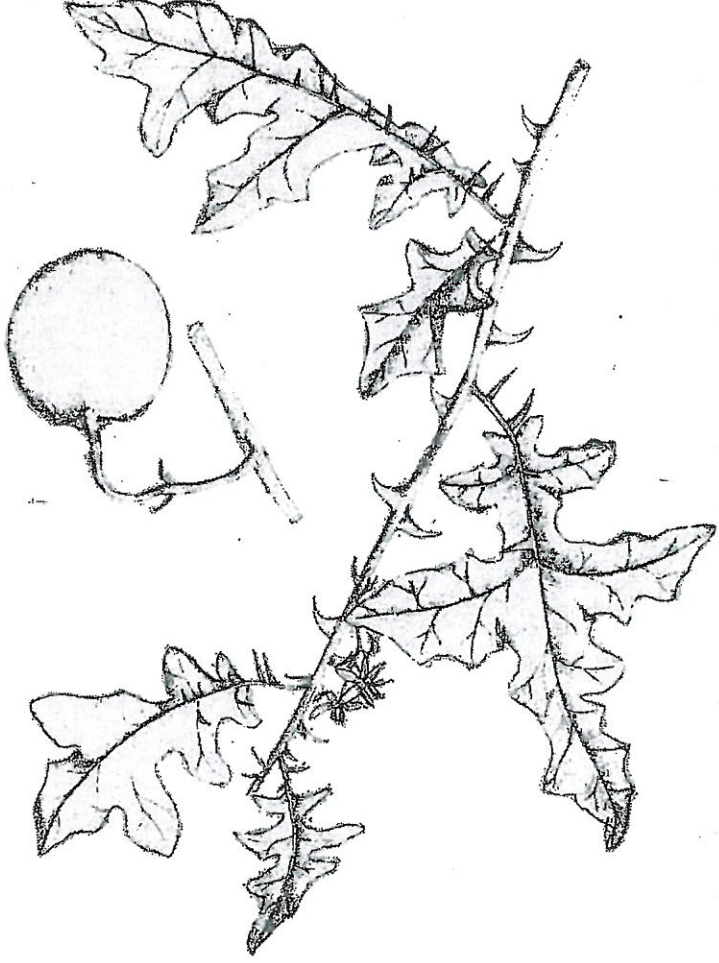
Solanum species—Bitter apple, thorn apple, monkey apple, bitter appetities, (see page 142).

Solanum have purple to mauve or pink flowers with a prominent yellow centre. Perhaps the most common species—*Solanum incanum*, *umDulukwa* (N), *muNkundurwa* (S)—is a spreading bush, up to four feet in height, found on waste land and roadsides throughout Rhodesia.

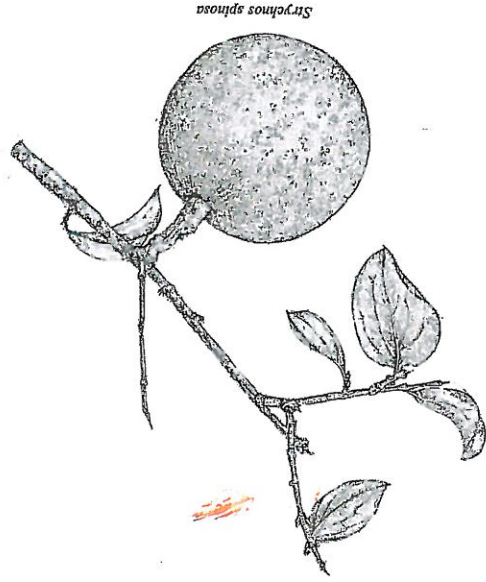
It has brown to grey stems and branches, hairy and with strong, hooked spines. The leaves are alternate with wavy margins, grey-green and hairy, especially beneath, and have hooked spines. Flowers are usually purplish and rarely white, like those of a potato. Ripe fruits are smooth, round and

yellow, up to one and a half inches in diameter and poisonous, especially when unripe.
Solanum aculeastrum, *Dungwiza* (S), *muTura* (M) is a spiny shrub often used for kraal fences. The bark is grey and foliage whitish and dusty-looking. Leaves are alternate and deeply lobed; the leaf blade is dusty-green above and covered with dense, white, downy hairs below; the short stalk and prominent lower veins carry thorns. The apple-sized fruit is yellow when ripe and resembles a tomato. It is poisonous.

Solanum aculeastrum



Strychnos species—Kaffir orange, umHiala, iHiala, umWawa (N), muTamba, muZumi (S), see page 143).
There are several species of *strychnos* having fruit varying from half-inch berries to four-inch "oranges". The pulp of some may be palatable but generally unless you are absolutely certain of these, treat the fruits as suspect.
The commonest species—*Strychnos spinosa*—is a tree having a smooth grey bark which when slashed shows yellow with green edges. Young twigs may end in a spine and twigs often carry short, paired and opposite, hooked spines.
Its oval leaves are simple, opposite, pale green and soft with between three and five veins rising from the base; leaves are smooth with wavy margins but may have patches of silky hairs in the angles of the veins below. The hard-shelled fruit ripens from green to yellow or pale brown and may be up to four inches in diameter. It contains a yellow-brown, acid pulp which in the fully ripe fruit is quite palatable. The seeds of unripe fruit should never be eaten.



killer peach pits



Peach pits contain small amounts of cyanide – a

poison that has been used often over the centuries as

a deadly poison.

Photo by Getty Images

make small animals very

sick and even kill them.

There have been cases of

goats, sheep and even cows

getting very sick because

they pick up and eat peach

pits on a regular basis.

Peaches are not the only

fruit to have cyanide-relat-

ed poisons.

Apple seeds, cherry seeds,

apricots and nectarines all

have these poisons as

well...

WHO doesn't love a juicy

peach?

But once you've eaten it,

you're left with a pit.

Most of us just throw it

to the ground. But did you

know that this can be very

dangerous?

Peach pits contain trace

amounts of a cyanide com-

pound.

Cyanide is a poison that

has been used often over

the centuries to deliberately

poison people.

It is also sometimes used

as a poison for pests such

as rats.

Peach pits don't hold

enough of this poison to

harm a person, but it could