Rhus marlothii

Bitter Karee

[khurubeb (K)]

[474 records from 182 (17%) squares]

Shrub; sometimes a small tree. Bark grey-white, relatively smooth; often with distinct lenticels on young branchlets. Leaves trifoliolate; leaflets sessile, obovate to broadly ob lanceolate; both surfaces olive-green, slightly downy; margin entire to slightly crenate near apex, fringed with fine white hairs; apex blunt to sub-acute; base tapering. Flowers tiny, star-like; greenish to pale yellow. Fruit almost round, slightly flattened, cinnamon-brown, shiny.

Can be confused with R. tenuinervis, which has far broader, softer, hairier leaves with a more distinctly crenate margin, and is usually found growing in sandy areas.

DISTRIBUTION & ABUNDANCE

Uncommon to common and fairly widespread in central Namibia, with isolated records in the north-east and north-west. Most common in the central highlands. The range has been extended by one degree to the north-west (HOFI, specimens LH954 and LH955).
HABITAT
Various, but mainly on hill slopes, especially in the central highlands; also found on plains and in dry rivers. Substrates include calcrite, mica schist, sand and occasionally loamy soil.

GROWTH FORM
Mostly a shrub in the 1–3-m height class, rarely a tree of over 3 m high.

ANNUAL CYCLE
FLOWERS December to May. FRUIT January to May. LEAVES semi-deciduous; bare individuals from July to September, young leaves from November to January.

GENERAL
The edible fruit is chewed to quench thirst; the roots are used medicinally. The leaves are eaten by caterpillars and rhino, but apparently not by stock as they are bitter. This plant often grows under other trees.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS
None recorded.

Rhus marlothii, Grootfontein area, G. Friederich