

Combretum imberbe

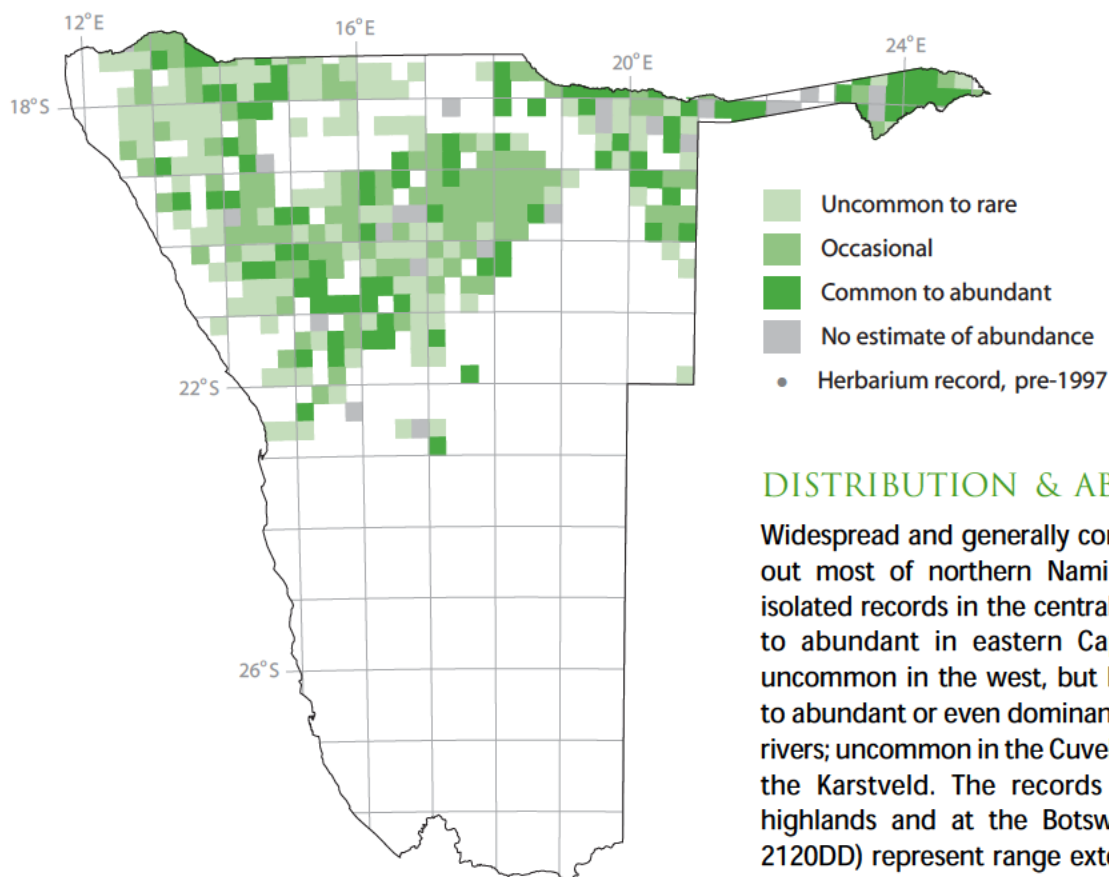
Omumborongbonga

Leadwood (E); hardekool (A); Ahnenbaum (G); muzwili (L); omukuku (O); omumbolombongo (Od); munyondo (Rk, Rum, T)

[1,254 records from 371 (35%) squares]



Semi-deciduous tree with **characteristic grey-green appearance**. BRANCHES young growth **decussate**; lateral branches sometimes **spinescent**. BARK dark grey, rough with **characteristic deep, vertical and transverse fissures dividing the bark up into small, square fragments**. LEAVES narrowly elliptic, 30–80 mm long; **both surfaces grey-green** due to fine scales; margin often undulate. FLOWERS yellow to cream-coloured, sweet-scented. FRUIT four-winged, **small**, (smallest of all combretum pods in Namibia); characteristically yellow-green, densely covered in scales; wings papery.



DISTRIBUTION & ABUNDANCE

Widespread and generally common throughout most of northern Namibia, with some isolated records in the central area. Common to abundant in eastern Caprivi; generally uncommon in the west, but locally common to abundant or even dominant in the western rivers; uncommon in the Cuvelai; occasional in the Karstveld. The records in the central highlands and at the Botswana border (in 2120DD) represent range extensions, but are as yet unconfirmed by specimens.

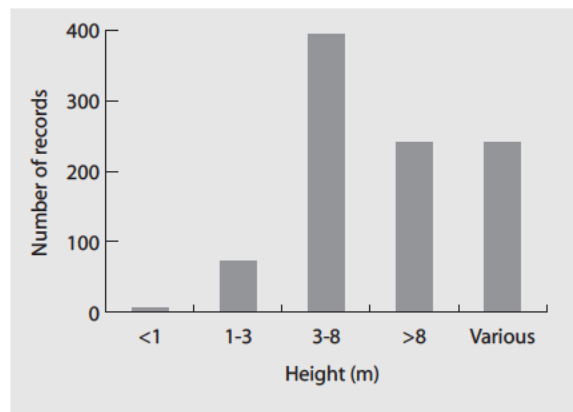
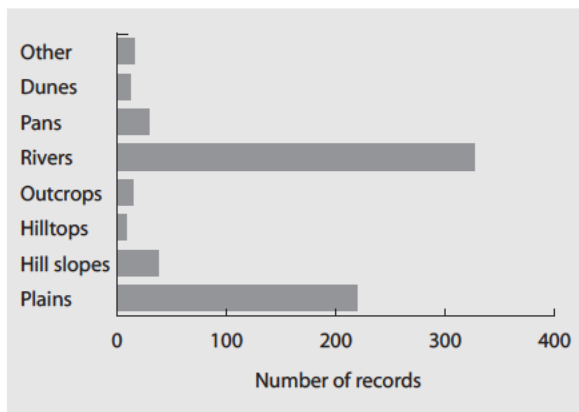
HABITAT

Found in various habitats, but mostly along dry rivers and on plains; on hill slopes in the Karstveld and on the north-central plateau. Substrates recorded included sand, loam, calcrete, and stony or rocky areas.

GROWTH FORM

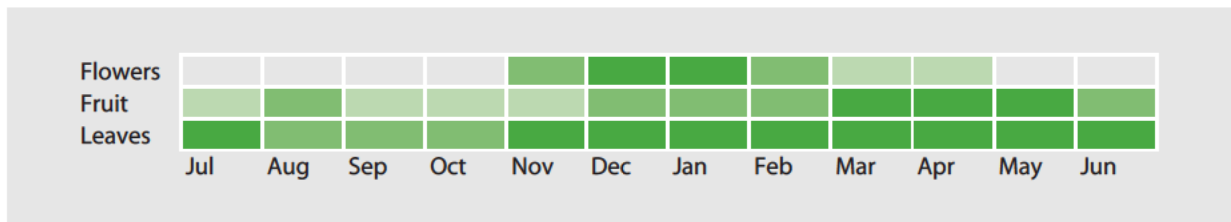
Mostly a tree up to 8 m high, although about 20% taller than 8 m. One particularly large individual was recorded on Farm Paderborn (1914DD) –

c. 12 m high, with a basal cone of 6.8 m circumference, tapering to a trunk circumference of 2.8 m at a height of half a metre (PLE1). There are also very old, majestic trees with gnarled and twisted trunks in the Khan River (CUR1, 2115DC). Young trees are probably under-recorded as often they bear little resemblance to mature trees. Along the Okavango floodplain there are many young trees ranging from a half to 3 m in height, as well as in the road-reserve in many places along the road from Otjiwarongo to Rundu (HOR2).



ANNUAL CYCLE

FLOWERS have been recorded almost all year round, but mainly from November until February. FRUIT present all year, but mostly from December to June. LEAVES present all year, with some bare trees from August to November, and young leaves from September to November.



GENERAL

Excellent shade tree, providing nesting sites for birds, such as White-browed Sparrow-weavers and raptors. It is browsed by antelope, giraffe, rhino and elephant, and livestock. The wood is hard, durable and termite-resistant, and is used for firewood, charcoal, and as building material, fencing and mine-props. The Owambo use the trunks to make 'oshini', a strong pounding instrument for grinding mahangu. Ash from the wood is used to clean teeth. The gum is edible.

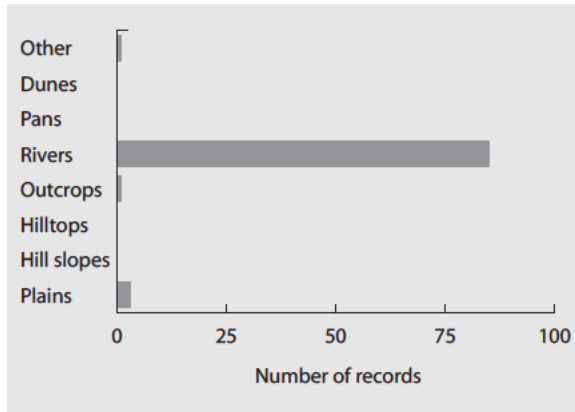
In the Owambo and Herero cultures, this tree holds great importance and is regarded as having mystical properties. In Kaokoland, *C. imberbe* poles are planted in graves during a burial ceremony known as 'okuhujambere'. The tree also has numerous medicinal properties.

The tree is attractive, and thus of horticultural potential, but slow-growing.

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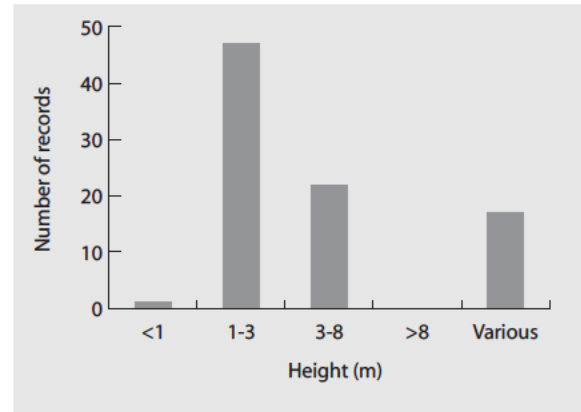
HABITAT

Mostly found in dry rivers and along river banks, occasionally on plains. On sandy or gravel substrates.



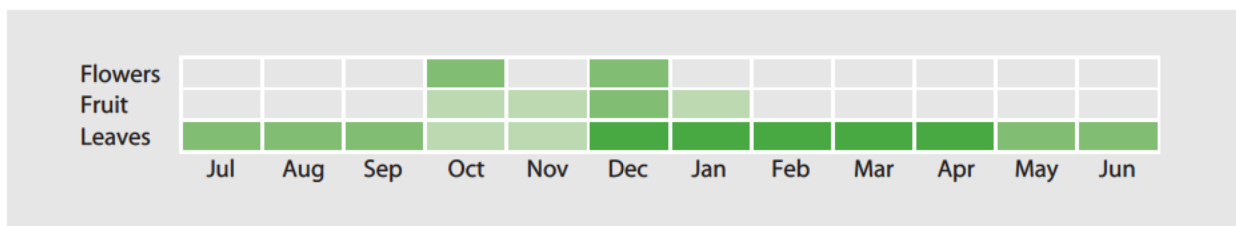
GROWTH FORM

Generally a shrub, mostly up to 3 m high. Can be a shrub or tree of over 3 m.



ANNUAL CYCLE

FLOWERS recorded in December, with single records other months; recorded in October by herbarium. FRUIT October to January, with single records most months. LEAVES mostly December to April, with young leaves in December.



GENERAL

Leaves browsed by various game species, but a favourite food of giraffe. Wood used to make knobkieries.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

None recorded.

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CONSERVATION CONCERNS

Although heavily utilised by people, regrowth is good and growth of young trees is vigorous. Because of its religious importance and many uses, it is protected locally; it is also formally protected by forestry legislation. There are many really old and beautiful specimens that warrant special protection as monuments.