

THE USEFUL PLANTS OF WEST TROPICAL AFRICA

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MALPIGHIACEAE

Acridocarpus chevalieri Sprague

FWTA, ed. 2, 1: 352.

A scandent shrub, pubescent, flowers and fruit yellow: in Mali to Ghana. Investigation has not revealed any active principle in the plant (1).

Reference:

1. Bouquet & Debray, 1974: 108.

Acridocarpus longifolius (G Don) Hook. f.

FWTA, ed. 2, 1:352.

A small tree or lianescent shrub to 6 m high, showy, young shoots pubescent to glabrescent, flowers yellow, fruit reddish; on river-banks in galleried riverine forest; in Liberia, S Nigeria, W Camerouns and Fernando Po, and in E Cameroun, Gabon, Angola, Principe and S Tomé.

Scapings of the bark with some salt and melegueta pepper (*Aframomum melegueta*, Zingiberaceae) are made into a draught, or an infusion of the root are taken in Gabon by men 'to cleanse' their sperm (2, 3). Investigation has not shown any active principle to be present (1).

References:

1. Bouquet & Debray, 1974: 108. 2. Walker, 1953,b: 291. 3. Walker & Sillans, 1961: 272.

Acridocarpus plagiopterus Guill. & Perr.

FWTA, ed. 2, 1: 352.

UPWTA, ed. 1, 134.

West African: SENEGAL BALANTA koro (JB) BANYUN daxundol (K&A) diakundol (JB) DIOLA hu luk (JB) ka ñama (JB) karab é sotébu (JB; K&A) DIOLA (Diembéren) héruy éyol (K&A) DIOLA (Fogny) bu bögel (K&A) kañama (K&A) DIOLA-FLUP karab esotébu (K&A) FULA-PULAAR (Senegal) daranei (K&A) MANDYAK be tivar (JB) SONINKE-SARAKOLE xalila (K&A) GUINEA-BISSAU BALANTA còrò (EPdS; JDES) BIDYOGO cahapandá (JDES) GUINEA FULA-PULAAR (Guinea) malanga kiangole (Langdale-Brown) SIERRA LEONE MENDE tejengbu (*def.* -i) (JMD)

A woody scandent shrub to 8-10 m high, rusty, puberulous branchlets, flowers orange or red, fruit reddish; of wooded savanna; in Senegal to Liberia.

In Casamance the various parts of the plant are considered medicinal. The stems, preferably leafy, are macerated for 24-28 hours in water which is then given to children as a strengthening tonic. Macerated stems are similarly used in washes and massages (2, 4). In Lower Casamance an aqueous decoction of the twigs is taken by adults as an aphrodisiac (3, 4)

A root-decoction is taken in Guinea as a vermifuge and remedy for sleeping-sickness (1, 5).

In Senegal and Guinea the root is deemed to have magical properties. Diola in Fogny consider it a fetish to exorcise devils (2). In Guinea, the root has magical use against snakes (1, 5).

References:

Acridocarpus smeathmannii (DC.) Guill. & Perr.

FWTA, ed. 2, 1:352.

UPWTA, ed.1, 134.

West African: SENEGAL DIOLA fu kéréfu (JB) fu kir (JB) fu litèn (JB) fu tabéfu (JB) SIERRA LEONE MENDE golonge (NWT) ndébéwu (NWT) TEMNE *ε*-kamai irematara (NWT) GHANA GA alasaayo (FRI) NIGERIA YORUBA elerujo (Macgregor) eruju (Macgregor) gborigbori (JMD; Verger) ododo (N&E) ògo-igbò = *toy, or top of the forest* (JRA; JMD)

A shrub to about 1 m high, or scandent with lianes 3–7 m long, twigs shortly hairy, flowers yellow, abundant, and fruit reddish; of riverine forest liable to flooding; Guinea-Bissau to N and S Nigeria, and into the Congo basin.

The plant grows into a handsome ornamental shrub (2).

Leaf-sap is expressed and used as an eye-lotion in S Nigeria, and is applied to crawl-crawl and taken internally for fever (1).

The root is pounded and taken in decoction as an alterative and purgative for colic and constipation, and is applied as an ointment for pemphigus (1).

References:

1. Ainslie, 1937: sp. no. 10. 2. Dalziel, 1937: 134.

Acridocarpus spectabilis (Niedenzu) v. Doorn

FWTA, ed. 2, 1: 353, as *Rhinopterys spectabilis* Niedenzu, and incl. *R. angustifolia* Sprague & *R. kerstingii* (Engl.) Niedenzu.

West African: SENEGAL BASARI *â*-bata (K&A) *a*-mbatia (JB) BEDIK *nya-tònyér-nyér* = *tree with pattern* (FG&G) DIOLA bu diing (JB) DIOLA (Fogny) budlêg (K&A) MANDING-BAMBARA kuru (JB; K&A) MANDINKA orovasulo (JB) THE GAMBIA MANDING-MANDINKA krufano (Fox) GUINEA BASARI *a*-mbatia = *basket of inheritance* (FG&G)

An undershrub to 50 cm high from a perennial root-stock, of riverine wooded savanna; in Senegal to Togo.

The root is the part of this plant that has attracted attention. It is bitter and is chewed in The Gambia (2) and in SE Senegal (1) as a substitute for kola nut, especially if such nuts are not available. The rhizomatous root is made into a decoction in the Casamance for use in baths and by draughts against parasites, especially scabies (3, 4). Tenda of SE Senegal chew the root for application to sores (1). Basari boil the root for urinary troubles (1).

For ceremonial occasions Tenda singers chew the raw root in the belief that this strengthens the voice for singing, or for the same purpose the root is pounded, dried, mixed with salt, and then eaten (1).

Mistletoe from this plant is steeped in water which is used to wash infants attacked by sorcerers (see Loranthaceae) (1).

References:

1. Ferry & al, 1974: sp.no. 210, as *Rhinopteryx spectabilis*. 2. Fox 41, K. 3. Kerharo & Adam, 1962: as *Rhinopteryx spectabilis* Niedenzu. 4. idem, 1974: 519, as *Rhinopteryx spectabilis* Niedenzu.

Byrsonima crassifolia (Linn.) Kunth

A shrub or small trees to 10 m high, native of the Caribbean region, and known to be present in The Gambia and Sierra Leone as an introduction.

The wood makes good charcoal (1–3).

The fruit is the size of a cherry, yellow in colour, with edible flesh (1–3), and is commonly sold in local markets in Mexico.

Flabellaria paniculata Cav.

FWTA, ed. 2. 1: 353.

UPWTA, ed. 1. 134.

West African: SENEGAL MANDING-MANINKA konombo (JB) GUINEA MANDING-MANINKA konombo (CHOP fide JMD) SIERRA LEONE LOKO kbebe (NWT) TEMNE *a*-kələmɔ (NWT) YALUNKA kemade-na (FCD) IVORY COAST BAULE popodi (A Chev. fide JMD) KRU-GUERE (Chiehn) bagio (B&D) KWENI mian (B&D) nipranipralané (B&D) KYAMA imbipopo (B&D) GHANA ADANGME kpatfu (FRI) AKAN-TWI kwaem-sabrakye (FRI; OA) trumdwee (OA) GA okpoi (FRI; OA) NIGERIA YORUBA *ajidèrè* = *on exerting oneself to acquire good luck; in an invocation to gain honour and prestige* (Verger) anikan-léti (Kennedy; JMD) *apònkòlò* = *resembling infants coming into the world* (Verger) *apònkòlò* = *ritual acts [which engender virility]* (Verger) *lagbò-lagbò* = *ritual acts [necessary to obtain good fortune]* (Verger; auctt.)

Liane 3–15 m high, up to 9 cm diameter, twigs shortly-hairy, leaves with silvery undersurface, flowers white to light pink; of wooded savanna, riverine forest or forest subject to flooding; distributed across the Region from Senegal to W Cameroons and Fernando Po, and across the Congo basin to Uganda and Tanganyika.

The leaf is used in Ghana and in Nigeria on wounds and sores (4, 5). In Ivory Coast leaf-sap is frequently taken for amenorrhoea, and sometimes as an ecboic (3).

The lianous stems serve as ties in hut-building in Ghana (1).

The root ground up with *wusa* (Twi: ? pepper) and the dried heads of cobra, mamba and viper is a vaccine used in the Mampong area of Ghana for snake-bite: seven cuts on the right side of the body have the preparation which has been dissolved in spirits or lime-juice rubbed into them, the process being repeated after one week. This is said to confer immunisation (2).

Chemical analysis has not detected any active principle to the plant (3).

References:

1. Abbiw, 1990: 83, 201. 2. Ampofo, 1983: 45. 3. Bouquet & Debray, 1974: 108. 4. Dalziel, 1937: 134. 5. MacGregor 172, K.

Heteropteryis leona (Cav.) Exell

FWTA, ed. 2, 1: 353.

UPWTA, ed.1, 134.

West African: GUINEA-BISSAU BIDYOGO blánhe-ae (EPdS; JDES) PEPEL ofèque (JDES) SIERRA LEONE LIMBA kaiyohò (NWT) LOKO ndurɔgɔ (NWT) MENDE *mbele* (*def. -i*) (Dawe) kuwi (NWT) tjengbwe (JMD) yawuli (NWT) SUSU koyisiri (NWT) XURUXOROKOI (NWT) TEMNE *ra-beja-ra-ro-mòk* (FCD) *ma-taki* (Afzelius fide JMD) *ma-tòki* (Afzelius fide JMD)

A shrub or liane to about 10 m high with stem up to 4 cm diameter, inflorescence a terminal panicle of yellow flowers and red-winged fruit; of the bush in coastal districts near to water; across the Region from Guinea-Bissau to W Cameroons, and dispersed over the Congo basin south to Angola, and into Principe and S Tomé.

The wood, though small, has local use as posts in Sierra Leone (3).

All parts of the plant yield an acrid sap. The seeds and leaves, or the fruit, are powdered to rub on the head to destroy head-vermin in Guinea (2) and Ghana (1). This is said to be speedily effective. Dried pulverised leaves have an analgesic property and are used prepared as a paste or poultice for application to the head for headache in fever and migraine (1, 2).

MALPIGHIACEAE

Malpighia spp.

FWTA, ed. 2, 1: 350.

English: Barbados cherry (*M. glabra* Linn); West Indian cherry (*M. puniceifolia* Linn.).French: cerisier des Antilles, cerise carrée; mourellier (*M. puniceifolia* Linn.).

A genus of about 25 species, evergreen shrubs and trees, mainly of tropical America, of which a number has been introduced for cultivation in the W African region.

M. puniceifolia Linn. is specifically recorded present in Senegal (1) and is grown as an ornamental. Its cherry-like fruits are acidulous and contain a high amount of *ascorbic acid*. The fruit-pulp is used in the W Indies for jams, preserves and sauces (3). *M. glabra* Linn. is certainly also present in W Africa. It is cultivated in the W Indies for its edible fruit and as an excellent hedge (2).

References:

1. Berhaut, 1967: 133. 2. Burkill, IH, 1935: 1398. 3. Uphof, 1968: 328.

Stigmaphyllon ovatum (Cav.) Niedenzu

FWTA, ed. 2, 1: 353.

West African: GUINEA-BISSAU BIAFADA bidjacarô (JDES) PEPEL ofêque (JDES)

A straggling scandent in mangrove swamps and over foreshore rocks; flowers yellow; of the western limits of the Region in Guinea-Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leone, and on the opposite shore of the Atlantic in Central and E Tropical America.

No use is recorded though the plant is known locally in Guinea-Bissau.

Thryallis glauca (Cav.) O Ktze

FWTA, ed. 2, 1: 350.

A glabrous shrub to 2 m tall, stems with reddish hairs, flowers bright yellow to 2 cm wide, crowded in terminal racemes; native of Central America, and introduced into many temperate and other tropical countries including W Africa.

The bush is showy and makes a good ornamental plant. It is commonly grown in the Region as a hedge (1). Propagation is easy by cuttings and shape can be maintained by clipping which should be done after flowering is over or its attractiveness will be lost.

Reference:

1. Keay, 1958: 350.

Triaspis odorata (Willd.) A Juss.

FWTA, ed. 2, 1: 354.

A climbing shrub with rusty-tomentose branchlets and pink or reddish flowers: of thickets and waste bushland in Sierra Leone to Togo.

MALVACEAE

Triaspis stipulata Oliv.

FWTA, ed. 2, 1: 354.

UPWTA, ed. 1, 134.

West African: NIGERIA EDO akwohoge (Ross) ebenowybae (Ross) IGBO (Idumuje) nni òkwè = *food bean* (NWT) IGBO (Ogwashi) otolu (NWT) YORUBA abèbè òdàn = *fan of the field* (JMD; Verger)

A liane with terminal or axillary flowers in abundant panicles, calyx pinkish brown, petals yellow, white and pink; of the forest in Togo to W Cameroons, and in E Cameroun.

The leaf is acrid and used in S Nigeria to control body-lice (2). Edo use the leaf-sap as an antiseptic on cuts in the substitution for the way in which iodine used to be used (1).

References:

1. Ross R.268, K 2. Thomas NWT.2125 (Nig. Ser.), K.

Tristellateia australasiae A Rich.

A climbing shrub, with drooping flower-shoots bearing yellow flowers in terminal racemes; native of SE Asia, and recorded present in Ghana as an introduction.

It is decorative and worthy of cultivation as a pretty garden ornamental.