

Tarchonanthus camphoratus

Family: Asteraceae

Species: *Tarchonanthus camphoratus* L.

Common Names: camphorwood and hottentot tobacco; leleshwa (East Africa)

Synonyms:

Tarchonanthus abyssinicus Sch. Bip.

Tarchonanthus minor Less.

Bayer Code: TACCA

Description: A much-branched, large shrub or small tree up to 6 m high. The bark is gray and rough and peels off in strips. Leaves are alternate, narrowly elliptical, up to 10 cm long, entire but with wavy margins, releasing the smell of camphor when crushed. Young leaves and twigs are white with dense hairs, giving the whole tree a silvery appearance. Mature leaves are hairy only on the underside. The flowers are creamy brown to yellow, individually very small, each with only a few florets but arranged in dense panicles up to 20 cm long, with male and female flowers on separate trees, or female in the lower half and male in the upper half of the inflorescence. Seeds are 4 mm long with a dense coating of white hairs.

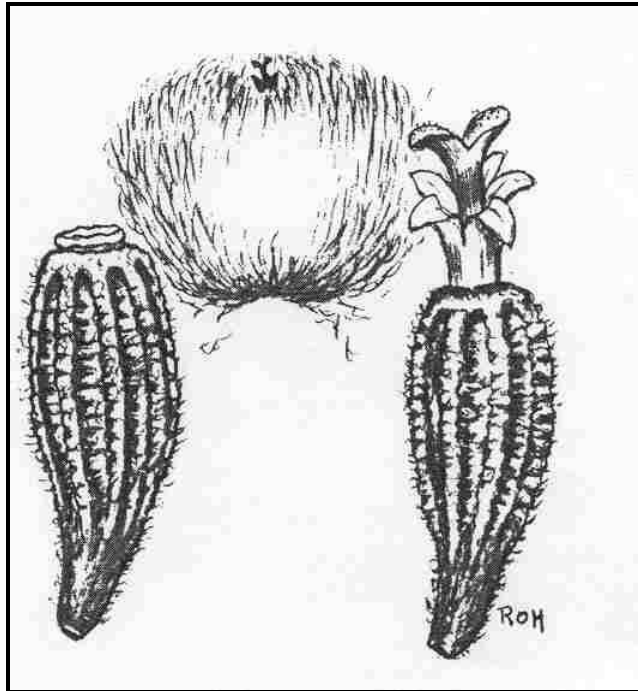


Figure 1. *Tarchonanthus camphorates* fruit from Reed (1977)



Figure 2. *Tarchonanthus camphorates* inflorescence from Blundell (1992)

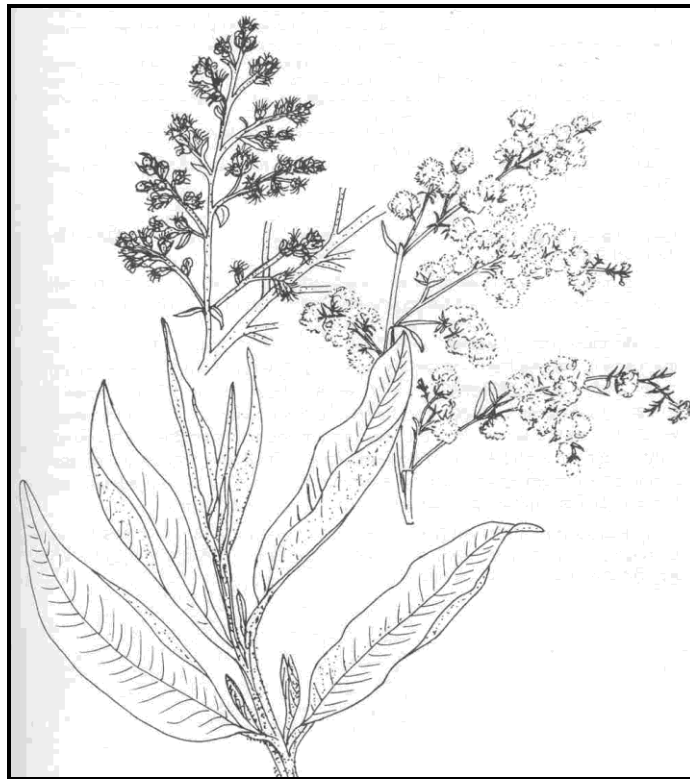


Figure 3. *Tarchonanthus camphorates* inflorescence from Noad and Birnie (1992)

Distribution: Native to Angola, Botswana, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

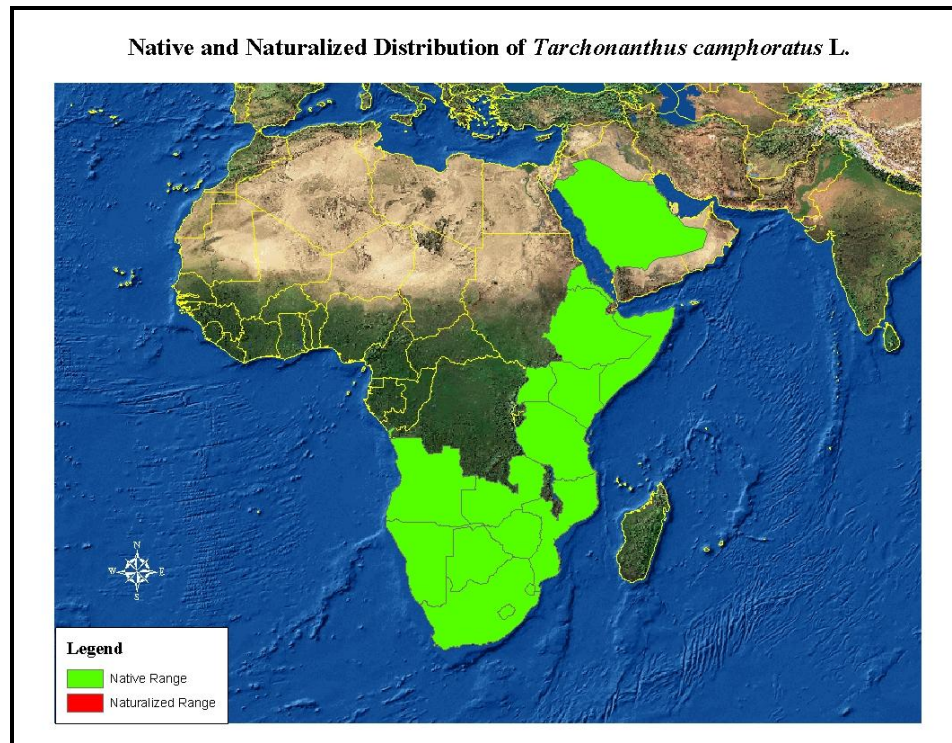


Figure 4. By Glenn Fowler, USDA APHIS PPQ CPHST, 2002 (Fowler, 2002)

Biology and Ecology: *Tarchoanthus camphoratus* is a plant of uplands in Kenya in a wide variety of habitats from 1,000 to 3,000 m. When cut or burned, there is vigorous regrowth from below ground to form dense thickets. Control can be extremely difficult (Ivens, 1967). Flowering occurs from December to February.

Possible Pathways to the United States: No information provided

Adverse Impacts: *Tarchoanthus camphoratus* is listed by Holm et al. (1979) as a “principal” weed of Kenya and Tanzania. In South Africa, Wells et al. (1986) referred to it as a “declared invader,” competitive, and replacing other vegetation in grasslands, on stream banks, and in ruderal situations. Splinters of wood are poisonous and cause septic sores which are slow to heal. It also taints milk and is a skin irritant. As an invasive species with great resistance to control, it would pose serious risk to a range of habitats in the United States.

Literature Cited:

Blundell, M. 1992. Collins Photo Guide to the Wild Flowers of East Africa
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Holm, L. G., J. V. Pancho, J. P. Herberger, and D. L. Plucknett. 1979. A Geographical
Atlas of World Weeds. Wiley, New York. 391 pp.

Ivens, G. W. 1967. East African Weeds and their Control. Oxford University Press,
Nairobi, Kenya. 244 pp.

Noad, T., and A. Birnie. 1992. Trees of Kenya: A fully illustrated guide (3rd). T.C. Noad
and A. Birnie, Nairobi, Kenya. 308 pp.

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- Wells, M. J., A. A. Balsinhas, H. Joffe, V. M. Engelbrecht, G. Harding, and C. H. Stirton. 1986. A Catalogue of Problem Plants in Southern Africa. *Memoirs of the Botanical Survey of South Africa* 53:1-658.