

Acacia seyal**Indigenous**

COMMON NAMES: **Boran:** Waachu adi, Waachu hallu; **English:** White-thorn acacia, White thorn; **Gabra:** Iddado; **Ilchamus:** Lera; **Kamba:** Mweya, Kisewa (Machakos); **Kikuyu:** Mugaa; **Kipsigis:** Mugurit; **Luhya:** Okulu; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumunyanya; **Luo:** Alii; **Maasai:** Olerai, Elereta, Elereta nanyokie, Oljerai (Ngong), Olerai oibor; **Marakwet:** Rena; **Mbeere:** Mureera; **Nandi:** Murigat; **Pokot:** Chooch, Chowogh, Rena; **Rendille:** Fulai; **Somali:** Fulay; **Swahili:** Mgunga; **Teso:** Ekoromai; **Turkana:** Echekereng, Ekoramait; **Wardai:** Kigaba gaolo.

DESCRIPTION: Thorny medium-sized tree up to 10 m high with an open flat-topped crown at maturity. **BARK:** Distinctive powdery greenish white to pale green or orange-red. **THORNS:** Diverging pairs, white, stout, to 8 cm, sometimes smaller or none. Some trees bear ant galls. **FLOWERS:** In very many bright yellow to orange round, fluffy heads; fragrant. **FRUIT:** Narrow, curved, shiny light brown pods, in bunches, slightly constricted between seeds, splitting on the tree.

ECOLOGY: A typical savanna acacia. Widespread in semi-arid areas of Africa from Senegal to Egypt south to Malawi and Zimbabwe. Found in Kenya in open or bushed grassland and woodland, especially at the foot of hills and on plains, often as the dominant tree. Thrives in seasonally flooded plains with black-cotton soil and in river valleys, 200–2,200 m; most common at about 1,500 m. Common also on rocky soils, less frequently on red soils. Agroclimatic Zones III–V. Flowers in September–October (Naivasha, Narok, Kajiado) and February–March (Mwingi, Kitui). Flowers in March–May, August–November and seeds in November–March in Bungoma.

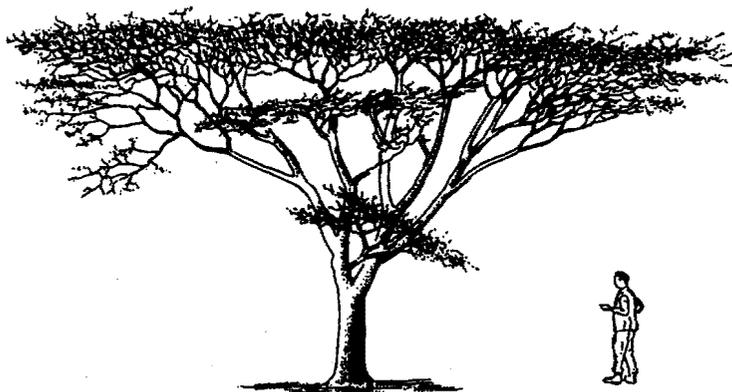
USES: Firewood, charcoal, poles, posts, edible gum, edible inner bark, drink (tea from ground bark), medicine (bark), fodder (leaves, pods, flowers, also bark in dry season, mainly for goats and camels), bee forage, nitrogen-fixing, windbreak, dead fence (thorny branches), gum, tannin, dye (ground bark).

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, wildings, direct sowing at site; produces root suckers.

SEED: 15,000–22,000 seeds per kg. Germination rate: 70–80%.

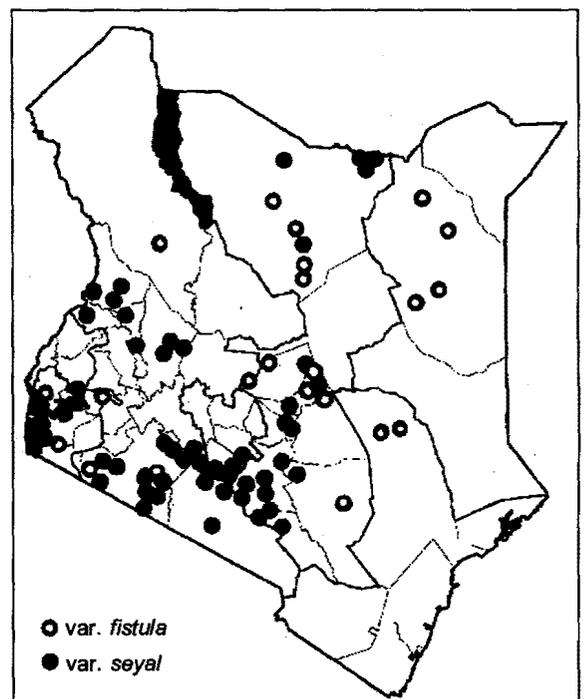
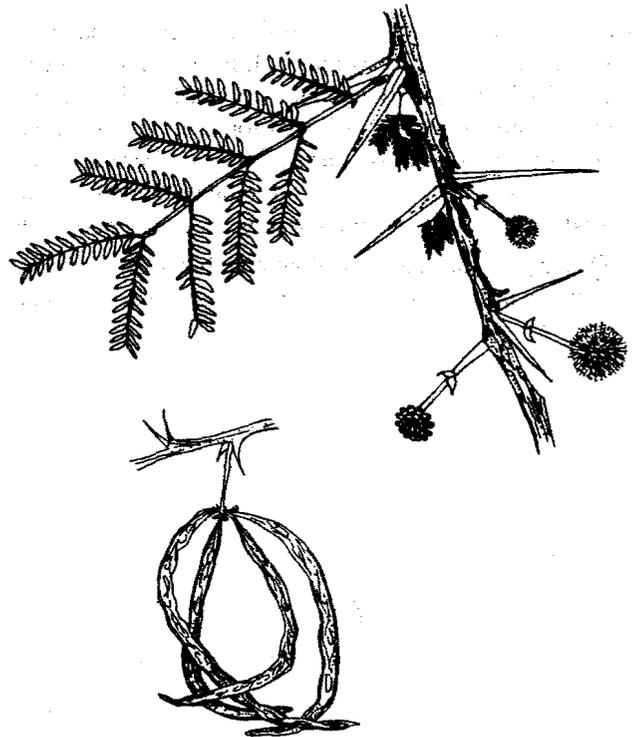
treatment: Not necessary for fresh seed. For stored seed, nick or soak in cold water for 24 hours.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods if kept free of insects.

**Fabaceae (Mimosaceae)**

MANAGEMENT: Medium to fast growing; lopping, pollarding, coppicing, pruning.

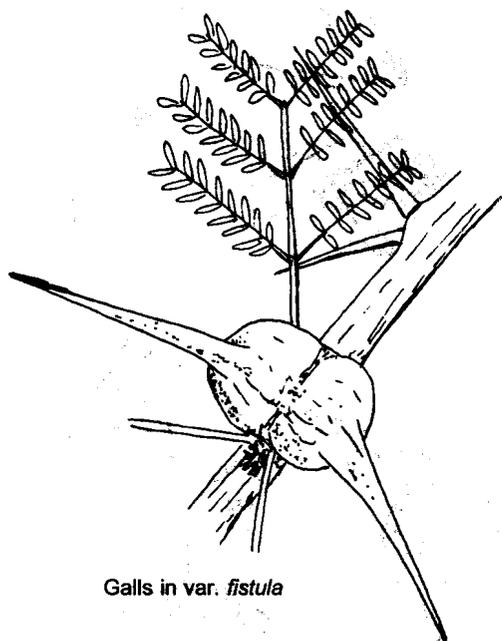
REMARKS: The tree produces a clear edible gum sold to generate income, although of less value than that of *A. senegal*. A local wood preservative called 'asal' is derived by boiling the bark in water. In the Luo community it is believed that planting the tree within the homestead causes the elder wife either to die or to remain childless. The Boran extract a red dye from the bark.



***Acacia seyal* (cont)**

Two varieties of this species occur in Kenya: var. *seyal* is the more common and has no galls, while var. *fistula* (Boran: Waachu dima; Somali: Fulay wajol; Tugen: Lelnet) has ant galls.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Albrecht, 1993; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Blundell, 1987; Dharani, 2002; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; National Academy of Sciences, 1979, 1980; Noad and Birnie, 1989.



Galls in var. *fistula*