

MEDICINAL PLANTS OF EAST AFRICA

THIRD EDITION

(Not intended as a “prescription book” for use by the general public)

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DEDICATION

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For his outstanding field and herbarium research contribution towards the publication of the “Flora of Tropical East Africa” (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) from 1948 to 1950 at Amani Research Institute (Tanzania), 1950 to 1964 at the East African Herbarium, National Museums of Kenya (Nairobi) and 1964 to present (2009) at Kew Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, U.K.

A brilliant scientist, a prolific and dedicated writer, Dr. Verdcourt has to date revised and published over 60 family accounts, including major contributions to Leguminosae and Rubiaceae, amounting to between a third and one half of the whole Flora of Tropical East Africa (FTEA). Revision of our flora FTEA commenced in 1952 and is nearing completion. Thank you for your major contribution which has made FTEA project a success. Wishing you a happy 84th birthday and a prosperous retirement.

DR.VERDCOURT



PREFACE

The material in this book should not be regarded as one person's work, but rather as knowledge by and of the people of East Africa. The author is therefore, simply a conveyor of the vital information from the past to the present and future generations. It is my modest contribution to science for the development of East Africa through my forty years (1968-2008) of teaching and research in Botany at the University of Nairobi.

The book is arranged in a fairly simple method for convenience of all readers. Botanical (scientific) names are grouped into their respective families, e.g. all legumes are arranged alphabetically under their bean or pea family called Leguminosae. The families are also arranged alphabetically.

The non-flowering plants (fungi, lichens and ferns) are discussed first, followed by the Gymnosperms and finally the most common group called the Angiosperms (the flowering seed plants). In the Angiosperms, the Dicotyledon families are arranged first followed by the Monocotyledon families.

Each plant name (botanical name) is given its vernacular name(s) equivalent. The only vernacular name(s) included are those from the areas where the medicinal information was obtained. In a few cases, the medicinal value of the plant was provided but no local name was known.

Tribes living along the common borders have occasionally borrowed herbal knowledge from their neighbours such as Malawi, Zambia, Burundi or Rwanda. Political boundaries are artificial and have not been recognized by local communities, especially the pastoral tribes even within East Africa itself. In cases where herbal remedies of a plant have been provided by two or more tribes the descriptions given are composite, reflecting all the views from the different ethnic groups.

The third edition of the book, 2009 is being published 32 years (by University of Nairobi Press) after its first publication in 1976 (by East African Literature Bureau). The new edition has about 35% additional

herbal species, expanded herbal information of the old species and additional vernacular names. Botanical names and families have all been updated to the latest revised flora parts of the region. This new edition has a second introduction into the area of traditional medicine as practised by both indigenous and naturalised people of East Africa. The new edition has 2 maps and 207 plant images in colour, a new element not covered in the original publication. The revision of the book from the original 384-page edition to the present edition of over 500 pages was through a generous research grant from the Inter-University Council for East Africa in Kampala, Uganda.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am most grateful to my employer the University of Nairobi for their continuous moral and financial support of this project since I joined them in 1968. My special thanks are to the current Vice Chancellor of the University, Prof. George A. O. Magoha whose support has made this third edition of the book a success.

My association with the East African Herbarium (EA) at the National Museums of Kenya dates back to 1966 when I first joined them as a graduate Research Botanist. It is the largest Herbarium in Africa, founded in 1902, and most of my research activities have been based on their collections. I am grateful to my mentor at the EA, the late Mr. J.B. Gillett for donating his extra plant images from which I selected a few to complement my large stock of illustrations. I am also grateful to Drs. Siro Masinde and Geoffrey Mwachala for granting me full support and access to the Herbarium during the revision of this new edition.

The Nairobi University Herbarium (NAI) is an internationally registered teaching and research Herbarium (founded in 1957) of the University of Nairobi. My sincere thanks are to my long-standing and articulate research associate Mr. Simon Mathenge with whom I have worked since 1968. Support was also received from postgraduate students Mr. Bethwell Owuor and Ms. Judith Odhiambo.

Thanks to the following experts who candidly prepared the following sections of the book. Mr. Wilson Okach formerly of Geography Department, University of Nairobi prepared the two coloured maps of East Africa depicting both administrative boundaries and ethnographical areas of the region. Mr. Jonathan Ayayo of the E.A. Herbarium scanned many of my selected plant slides and photographs and produced the camera ready diskettes of 207 plant images. He also designed the cover page.

My son Mr. Steven Kokwaro, diligently keyed into his computer my accumulated additional data for the revised edition. The momentous task of typing, editing and typesetting the manuscript has been candidly accomplished by Ms. Barbara Owuor of the E.A. Herbarium, Mr. Godfrey

Malika of the Great Lakes University of Kisumu, Ms. Monica Agunda of the School of Biological Sciences, University of Nairobi and Mr. Mathew Oduki of Kul Graphics Ltd.

I acknowledge the first research grant from the Inter-University Council for East Africa in Kampala, granted in 2006 for the preparation and revision of the new edition. This grant covered among other items, the new element of colour illustrations of maps and plant images. The printing cost of the new edition has been supported by the University of Nairobi through the Vice Chancellor's research grant and the Deans Committee grant. Further printing cost support was received from the National Co-ordinating Agency for Population and Development (NCAPD), a Kenya Government body embracing Traditional Medicine and Medicinal Plants as practised by traditional practitioners.

Finally, my sincere thanks are to Prof. Leonard Newton of Kenyatta University who proof read the manuscript and made valuable corrections and suggestions.

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January, 2009

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	iv
Preface.....	v
Acknowledgments	vii
Selected Bibliography	ix
East Africa Administration Map.....	xvii
East Africa Ethnographic Map.....	xviii
Introduction to Herbal Remedies	1
Introduction to Traditional Medicine	10
Part I	19
Plant Species and the Diseases Treated	19
Fungus, Lichens and Ferns	20
Gymnosperms	23
Angiosperms (Dicotyledons)	23
Angiosperms (Monocotyledons).....	298
Index to Botanical Illustrations	321
Part II.....	325
Diseases and the Plant Species used for Treatment.....	325
I. Diseases of The Head	326
1. Headache.....	326
2. Diseases of the Nose	328
3. Diseases of the Eye	329
4. Diseases of the Ear.....	330
5. Diseases of the Mouth, Tongue and Teeth.....	331
II. Diseases of the Throat and Neck.....	332
1. Sore Throat	332
2. Tonsilitis	332

3. Bubonic Diseases	333
4. Injured Neck.....	333
III. Diseases of the Chest	333
1. Pneumonia.....	333
2. Tuberculosis.....	333
3. Asthma	334
4. Coughs	334
5. Bronchitis.....	336
6. General Chest Illness	336
IV. Diseases of the Abdomen..	337
1. Diarrhoea.....	337
2. Dysentery	338
3. Typhoid Fever.....	339
4. Constipation	339
5. Indigestion.....	340
6. Stomach Ache	341
7. Heartburn	343
8. General Abdominal Pains	343
9. Haemorrhoids.....	345
10. Hernia.....	345
V. Emetics, Anti-Emetics and Purgatives (Laxatives).....	345
1. Emetics.....	345
2. Anti-Emetics	346
3. Purgatives (Laxatives)	346
VI. Intestinal Worm Infections	348
1. Hookworm	348
2. Roundworm.....	348
3. Tapeworm	349

4. Threadworm.....	349
5. General Anthelmintics	349
VII. Bilharzia & Filarial Infections.....	351
1. Bilharzia	351
2. Elephantiasis (Filariasis).....	351
VIII. Female Conditions and Diseases.....	351
1. Menstruation	351
2. Pregnancy.....	352
3. Childbirth	352
4. Post-Partum and Uterine Problems.....	353
5. Breast and Lactation	353
6. Abortion	354
7. Sterility.....	354
IX. Sexually Transmitted Infections	355
1. Gonorrhoea	355
2. Syphilis	356
3. Orchitis (Swollen Testicles).....	357
4. Yaws	357
5. General Sexually Transmitted Infections.....	358
X. Skin Diseases	358
1. Leprosy	358
2. Rashes	358
3. Ringworm	359
4. Abscesses & Boils.....	359
5. Warts	360
6. Pimples.....	360
7. Ulcers	360
8. Wounds (Including Burns).....	360

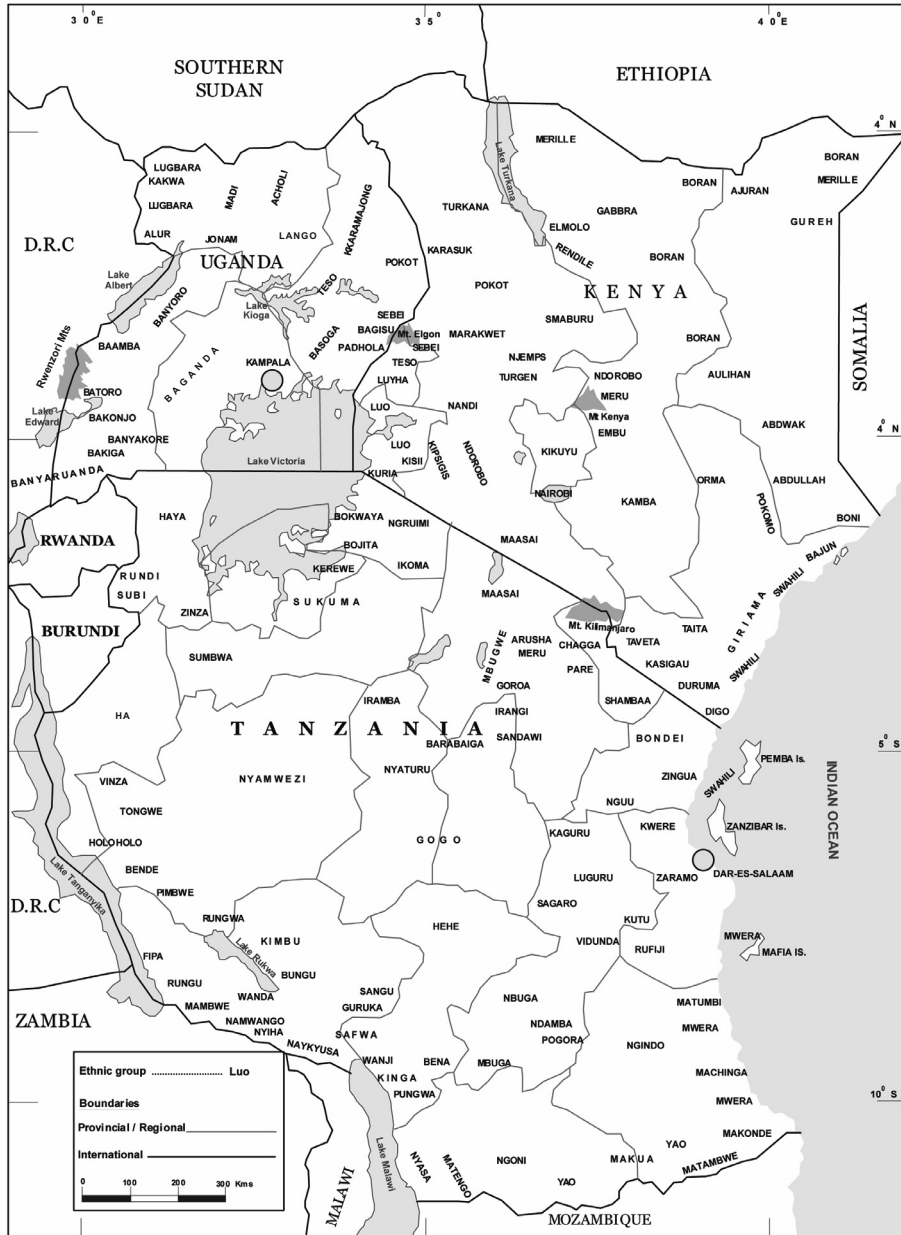
9. Sores.....	362
10. Whitlows.....	362
11. General Skin Diseases & Body Pains.....	363
XI. Ectoparasitic Diseases	363
1. Scabies	363
2. Fleas (Including Jiggers).....	363
3. Maggots.....	363
4. Lice	363
XII. Systemic, Parasitic and Viral Diseases.....	364
1. Malaria	364
2. Influenza and Fevers	365
3. Glandular Swellings.....	365
4. Smallpox	365
5. Chicken Pox	365
6. Measles	365
7. Anthrax	366
8. Sleeping Sickness.....	366
9. Management of HIV and AIDS	366
XIII. Nervous System Diseases	366
1. Backache and Lumbago.....	366
2. Epilepsy.....	366
3. Paralysis and Palsy.....	367
4. Polio	367
5. Mental Illness	367
6. Captive Qualm	367
XIV. Cardiovascular Diseases	367
1. Haemorrhages and Haemostatics	367
2. High Blood Pressure	367

3. Palpitation and other Heart Problems	368
4. Dropsy or Oedema	368
5. Anaemia	368
XVV. Liver, Pancreas & Spleen Diseases (Including Yellow Fever)	368
XVI. Kidney and Bladder Diseases	369
1. Kidney and Bladder	369
2. Cystitis	370
XVII. Bone and Joint Diseases	370
1. Broken and Sprained Body Parts.....	370
2. Rheumatism, Arthritis and Joint Diseases.....	370
XVIII. Cancer	371
XIX. Antidotes	372
1. Snake Bites.....	372
2. Scorpion, Spider and Tortoise Bites	374
3. Arrow Poisoning	374
4. General Antidotes	374
XX. Anaesthetics and Analgesics	374
1. Anaesthetics	374
2. Analgesics	374
XXI. Aphrodisiacs, Stimulants and Tonics.....	375
1. Aphrodisiacs	375
2. Stimulants	376
3. Tonics.....	376
XXII. Lassitude, Impotence And Kwashiorkor	376
XXIII. Mental Illness (Psychosomatic Diseases)	377
XXIV. Ritual Plants and Witchcraft	377

XXV. Ethnoveterinary Medicine	378
1. Anthrax	378
2. Black Quarter	378
3. East Coast Fever	378
4. Foot and Mouth	378
5. Lumpy Skin	378
6. Conjunctivitis and other Eye Diseases	378
7. Constipation and Indigestion (Bloat)	378
8. Diarrhoea and Purgatives	379
9. Delivery and Calving	379
10. Lactation Problems	379
11. Lung Diseases	379
12. General Fever	379
13. Sores and Wounds	379
14. Swollen Glands	379
15. Throat Cancer	380
16. Anti-Fleas or Mites	380
17. Anti-Maggots	380
18. Snake-Bite Antidotes	380
19. General Medicine for Cattle	380
20. General Medicine for Goats and Sheep	380
21. General Medicine for Poultry	380
22. General Medicine for Dogs	380
23. Deworming	380
Glossary of Medicinal Terms	382
Index to Vernacular Names	394
Index to Botanical Names	463



EAST AFRICA ADMINISTRATION (1976)



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