

(Reprinted from "Rhodesia Agricultural Journal.")

Vol. 51, No. 1

January-February, 1954

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ISSUED BY AUTHORITY OF

The Minister of Agriculture and Lands

Notes on Indigenous Trees and Shrubs of S. Rhodesia

Androstachys johnsonii Prain (Euphorbiaceae)

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SALISBURY:

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BY THE ART PRINTING WORKS, LTD., SALISBURY.

Androstachys johnsonii Prain
(Euphorbiaceae)

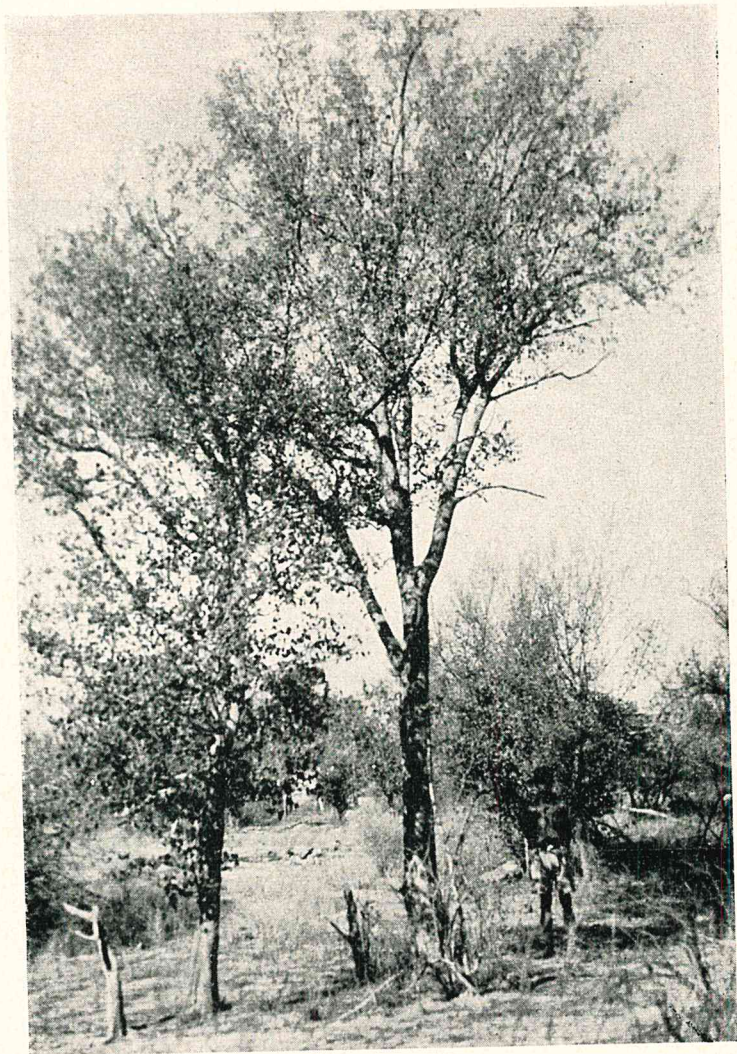
Common Name: Umzimbiti.

Native Names: Simbeti, muzimbiti (Chis.).

General Description: This is one of our less common trees, being found only in the south-eastern part of this Colony. It is a tree of fairly erect habit. It is commonly about 35-40 feet in height but may be taller. Branchlets which have a covering of short grey hairs are angular and articulated. The leaves are simple, opposite and decussate, i.e., one pair is set at right angles to the next pair. The leaf stalk, about one-third of an inch in length, is covered with fine, silky hairs. There is a tendency for the point of attachment with the leaf blade to be very slightly inside the edge of the blade, i.e., there is a tendency for the leaf to be peltate. The blade, of somewhat leathery texture, is dark green and shiny above and densely covered with a mat of short whitish grey hairs beneath. The leaves average about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by about 1 inch in width. They have round bases and slightly pointed to rounded tips. There are prominent, connate, sheathing stipules up to an inch in length, with an external covering of grey hairs and rounded tips. These stipules protect the leaf buds and young flowers. They do not persist for long. Flowers, which are small and are either male or female, appear during the earlier part of summer. The male flowers are in small spikes and the female flowers are solitary. The fruit is a 3-, or occasionally up to 5-, locular capsule and contains several seeds. The fairly rough bark is of a darkish grey colour.

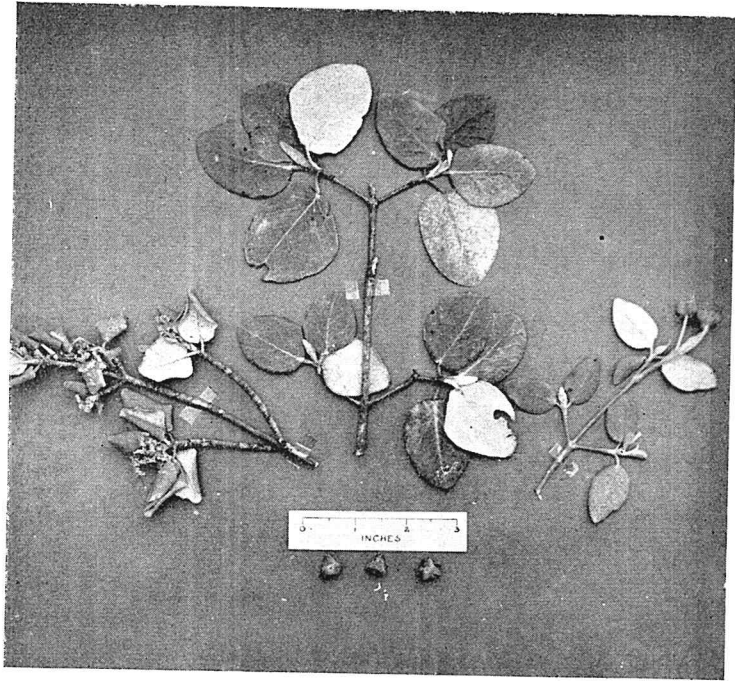
Distribution: The umzimbiti is found, usually growing gregariously, on better drained soils of hills and ridges in the low veld in the south-eastern part of Southern Rhodesia. Over extensive patches in that area it forms dense shrub thickets up to about 10 feet in height. It is also found in territories adjoining that area and in the Union is found as far south as Zululand.

Uses: The wood is hard, strong and of an even, fine texture, and with a somewhat curly grain. There is a comparatively narrow sapwood zone of a yellowish-white colour. The durable heart wood is of a brownish colour with sometimes darker markings. The air-dry weight of the timber is about 62lb. per cubic foot. Although the timber is hard it can be sawn and worked without great difficulty. It can be used for heavy construction work, railway sleepers, piles, joinery, parquet flooring and fence posts.



Androstachys johnsonii
Habit photo

[Photo by R. W. Rail



Androstachys johnsonii
Leaves, male flowers and fruit

[Photo by A. A. Pardy