



Senna obtusifolia

Family name: Leguminosae

Common name: Leguminosae

Local name: Alkawal, Sorib, Sorib Afin



Wild



Role in Biodiversity

Senna obtusifolia, as an invasive species, affects the growth and productivity of herbaceous vegetation in many habitats especially in semi-arid regions. In Africa, *Senna obtusifolia* is considered as an important leafy vegetables of the Sahelian region. In some habitats, however, it invades rangelands and completely dominates grass species. Livestock do not graze on this species in its green stage due to the presence of toxic substances.



Environment and Growing

Senna obtusifolia is dry tolerant plant. It grows in cropped land, pastures, roadsides, waste land, woodland and natural grasslands. It can grow in a range of soil types, including heavy-textured and well aerated or sandy soils such as sand, loam, chalky, and clay.

Growth requirements:

- Annual precipitation ranging 640–4290 mm with an optimum of 1520 mm.
- Optimum temperature ranges 20–35 °C.
- Soil pH range 5.5-7.



Reproduction and Communication

Senna obtusifolia reproduces only by seed. It has bisexual flowers. Although the flowers have a strong unpleasant smell and they heavily visited by bees, self-pollination and fertilization usually occurs before the flowers open.



Life span

Senna obtusifolia lives for a year or less.



Size

Senna obtusifolia can grow to heights of 1.5 to 2.5 metres.



Parts



Stems are erect, branched, lack hairs (glabrous).

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Senna obtusifolia has a stout taproot system.



Leaves are green to dark green with a paler undersurface, alternate and comprised of 4-6 leaflets that are egg-shaped and arranged pinnately compound.



Flowers are solitary or in pairs, yellow, in leaf axils, on pedicels, 1-3 cm long.



Fruits are sickle-shaped, hairless pods. They are green but turning dark brown with maturity.



Seed are rhomboidal, 4-5 mm long, shiny and yellowish brown to dark red.

INTRODUCTION

Herb

Senna obtusifolia, sicklepod, has a mixed reputation. It is a short-lived perennial herb, native to tropical South America but now invasive and widespread throughout the tropics and subtropics. This plant has large seeds that are readily dispersed by livestock. For livestock the green leaves and seeds are poisonous but as a food resource sicklepod is one of the important leafy vegetables of the Sahelian region.

In Sudan, *Senna obtusifolia* is found mostly on the clay plains of the central rain lands and in the westren regions. It is known locally in western and central Sudan as **kawal** and in the east as **Sorib** or **sorib afn**. The leaves of this plant are considered one of the most important materials used as fermented food in Sudan..

LIVELIHOODS / CULTURE

Cultivation

Senna obtusifolia is not cultivated in Sudan. It grows naturally in its ecological zones of distribution.

Cultural Value

In Sudan, the leaves, seeds and stems of *Senna obtusifolia* have several uses as foods, feed and for pharmaceutical uses. Kawal, from fermented green leaves, is a high protein product eaten as substitute to meat specially in Westren Sudan. The juice from this fermentation is a good ingredient in making a stew with okra. Seeds are used as a substitute for coffee.

In North Darfur a decoction from the seeds is used to treat jaundice, headaches, stomach pain, and fatigue. Macerated seeds are used by the Barti tribe community in the Fangoga area and in Sinar State to treat diabetes.

Cultural Expressions

Information not available...

THREATS

Senna obtusifolia is considered a particularly problematic invasive weed. It has most recently been assessed for The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species in 2017 and is listed as Least Concern.

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