

# Traditional Food Plants of the Upper Aswa River Catchment of Northern Uganda - A Cultural Crossroads

Eliot Thomas Masters (✉ [Eliot.Masters@nmit.ac.nz](mailto:Eliot.Masters@nmit.ac.nz))

Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT)

---

## Research

**Keywords:** agro-biodiversity, underutilized species, wild food plants, food security, parkland agroforestry system

**Posted Date:** September 30th, 2020

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-80621/v1>

**License:**  This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

[Read Full License](#)

---

**Version of Record:** A version of this preprint was published at Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine on April 6th, 2021. See the published version at <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13002-021-00441-4>.

# Abstract

## Background

In the parkland agroforestry system of northern Uganda, smallholder farming households rely on a diversity of plant species to fulfil their nutritional requirements, many of which also serve a range of medicinal, cultural and livelihood functions. A longitudinal study of the utilization and management of on-farm plant biodiversity by rural communities was undertaken, over several decades, with a specific focus on wild and semi-cultivated food plants. The purpose of the study was to assemble an inventory of indigenous plant species used as food in four districts within the Aswa River catchment of northern Uganda.

## Methods

Focus group discussions were conducted at 34 locations. Plant specimens were collected during field walks, and submitted to the Makerere University Herbarium for identification. Key informant interviews were conducted to document the botanical, ecological, seasonal and alimentary attributes of each species, and details of its processing and utilization.

## Results

The study presents the edible plants of four districts in the Aswa River catchment of northern Uganda. A total of 232 key informant interviews yielded 1,303 use reports (URs) for 373 identified specimens of 95 edible species. The data constitute an inventory of on-farm plant species, including cultivated, semi-cultivated and wild plants, integrated into a parkland agroforestry system in which useful trees and other plant species are sustained and managed under cultivation.

## Conclusions

Agricultural and on-farm plant biodiversity may be seen as a food security resource, and a nutritional buffer against increasing risks and stressors on low-input smallholder agriculture. Further studies should assess the intra-species biodiversity of these resources, with respect to farmer-valued traits and vernacular (folk) classification systems.

# Full Text

This preprint is available for [download as a PDF](#).

# Tables

Due to technical limitations, table 1-5 is only available as a download in the Supplemental Files section.

# Supplementary Files

This is a list of supplementary files associated with this preprint. Click to download.

- [MapGPSPointsUG18.08.20PDF.pdf](#)
- [TFPsoftheupperAswatables.pdf](#)