



Handbook of
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MEDICINAL
PLANTS**

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COMBRETUM MICRANTHUM G. Don (Combretaceae)

Synonyms — *C. altum* Lerr., *C. floribundum* Engl. & Diels, *C. raimbaultii* Heck.

Common Name — Kinkeliba bark.

African Names — Hausa: geza; Igbo: obi-agwu; Swahili: mlama muepe; Yoruba: okan.

Description — It is a bushy shrub or creeper, grows up to 20 m in length. The leaves are opposite, oval acuminate with the lamina covered with reddish scales on the inner side with downy tufts at the axis of lateral ribs. The flowers are born as short axillary clusters on scaly stalks, with a whitish corolla and ferruginous scales covering the calyx. The fruits are small, 1.5 m in diameter, with scaly and ferruginous uberuhum, four winged.

Habitat and Distribution — The genus is found all over the continent, but the subject species appears to be dominant in the Savanna belt. It is found from Sudan to Nigeria, and from Gambia to Congo. Several related species are used medicinally in southern African.

Medicinal Uses — Decoction of the root of *Combretum micranthum* (also *C. mucronatum*, Fam. Combretaceae) is used in west Africa for the treatment of guinea worm infestation (313). An oral dose (0.03 g/kg) of the decoction caused a complete extrusion of the worms in 43 of the 44 patients treated. There was a marked reduction in the inflammation around the lesions. Ampofo also found that application of sterilized palm oil aided in the healing of the wounds (313). *Combretum* has been used as an antidiuretic, anticholagogue, and antibacterial (77). The leaves of this plant yield a drug called "Kinkeliba," which has been listed in the French, Spanish, and British Extra Pharmacopoeia under supplementary drugs and indicated for black-water and other fevers (133). A decoction of the leaf and root is applied as a vapor bath, as a wash for febrile conditions, and as a remedy for lumbago (77). An ointment prepared with the pulverized dry fruits has been used as application to suppurating wounds and abscesses. Various

members of the genus are also employed as an anthelmintic in many parts of Africa and Asia.

Constituents — *Combretum* species yield catechins, glycosides, choline, organic acids, tannins, and resin. The isomeric flavonoids vitexin and saponaretin have been shown to be present in the leaves (314). The leaves also contain the alkaloids combretacins (315). The stem bark has been shown to yield similar alkaloids (316).

Pharmacological Studies — Extracts of the leaves are inhibitory against strains of *Staphylococcus*, *Streptococcus*, and *Escherichia* (317). The stem bark extract has also been shown to possess broad spectrum antimicrobial activity (173). The catechins are strongly diuretic with a mild hypotensive action (318). The young leaves of a related species *C. racemosum* are effective as an anthelmintic (319).