

Ethnobotanical survey enlightens traditional knowledge, use and conservation of plants in Kenya

March 9 2021, by Zhang Nannan

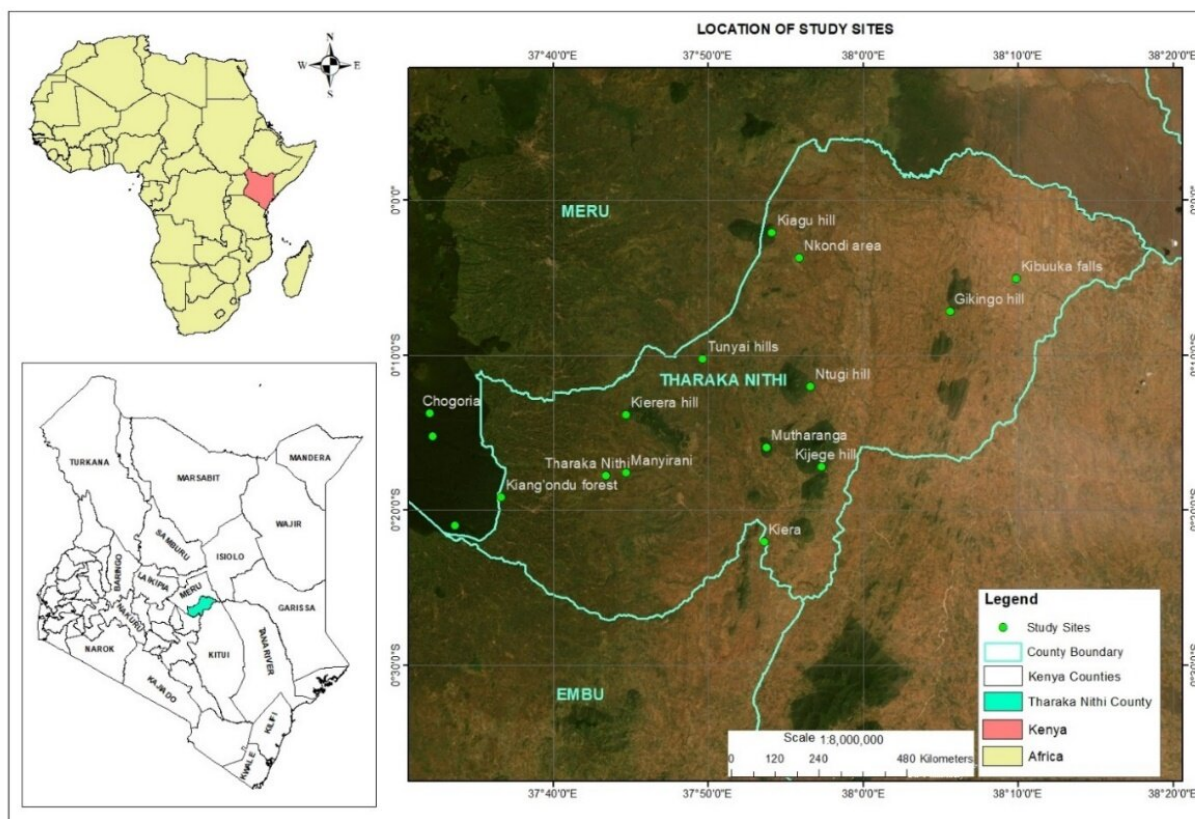


Fig. 1. Location and study sites of Tharaka-Nithi County, Kenya. Credit: SAJOREC

An ethnobotanical survey conducted in Tharaka-Nithi County in Kenya has revealed high traditional knowledge of plant resources held by the residents. This is the first study ever done in all the regions of the county, according to researchers from the Sino-Africa Joint Research Center (SAJOREC) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

In this study, 214 plant species distributed in 73 [plant families](#) were recorded to have 616 usage reports. This was documented from four communities with different but closely related dialects within a wide range of climatical and vegetation diversity.

It reveals the role of medicinal plant species in Tharaka-Nithi County. Based on the Relative Frequency of Citation (RFC) values, the most important plant species were *Zanthoxylum gillettii*, *Ludia mauritiana* J.F. Gmel., and *Carissa spinarum*, which were reported to be used in management of malaria. *Rauvolfia mannii* Stapf, *Ludia mauritiana*, *Zanthoxylum gilletti* and *Ocotea usambarensis* Engl. were reported to be applied against cough. *Sclerocarya birrea* (A.Rich.) Hochst. and *Adansonia digitata* L. were reported for backache and gastrointestinal conditions.

Given that the conservation status of most recorded [plant species](#) is unknown, this is a great step towards a [sustainable future](#) by ensuring that species use knowledge is spread to avoid overexploitation. The higher the number of species used for a need, the lower the risk of overexploitation.

This research, titled "Traditional knowledge, use and conservation of plants by the communities of Tharaka-Nithi County, Kenya," was published in *Plant Diversity*.

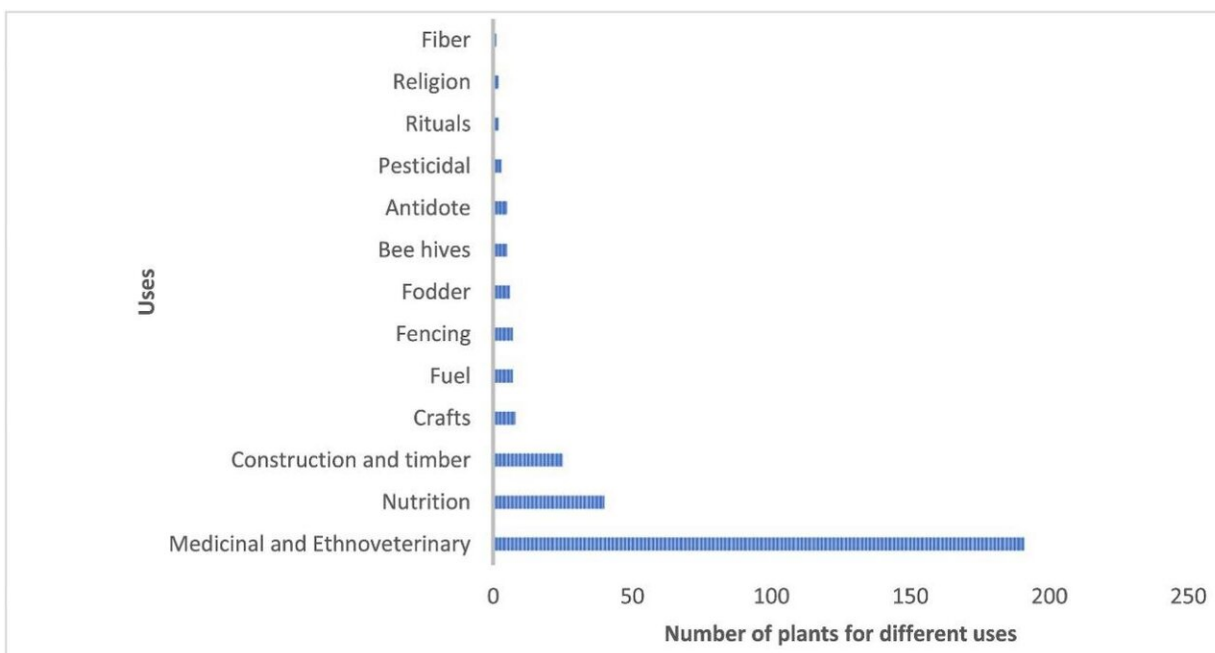


Fig. 2. Number of plant species per use category in Tharaka-Nithi County.
Credit: SAJOREC

More information: Vivian Kathambi et al. Traditional knowledge, use and conservation of plants by the communities of Tharaka-Nithi County, Kenya, *Plant Diversity* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.pld.2020.12.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pld.2020.12.004)

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