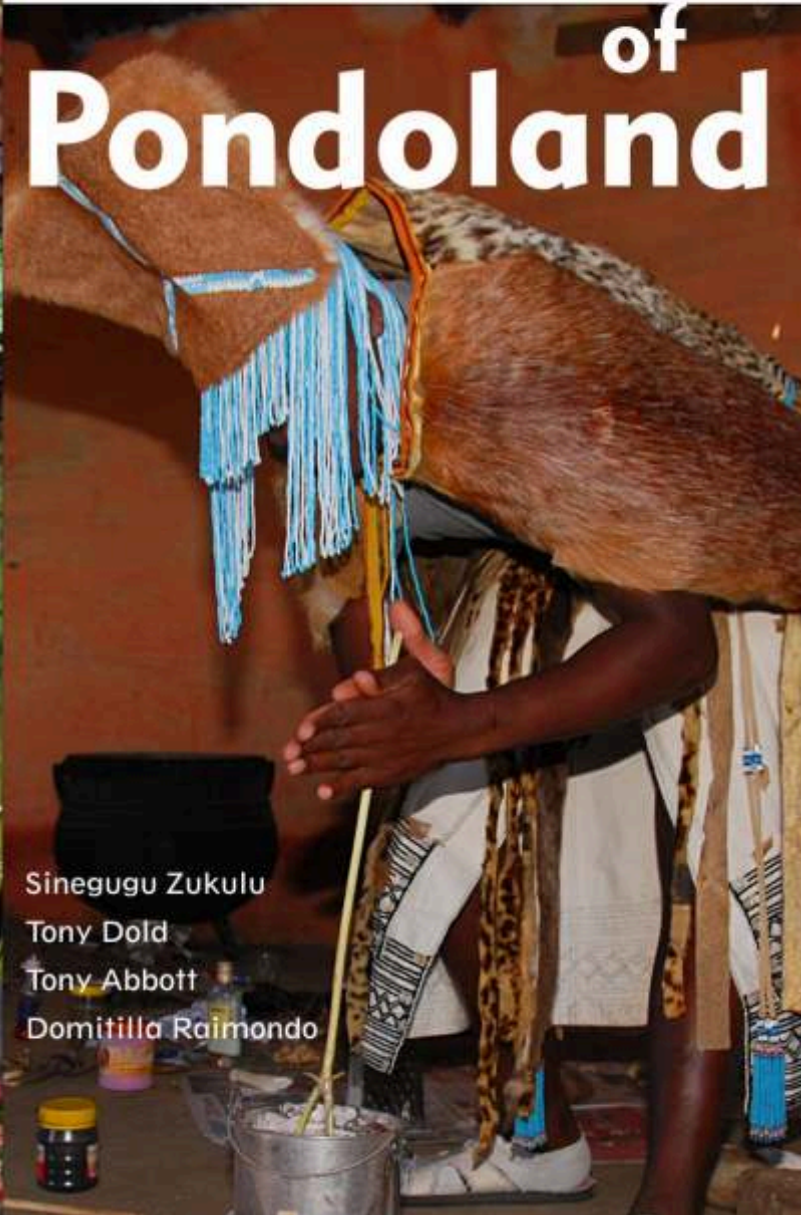




Medicinal and Charm Plants of Pondoland



Sinegugu Zukulu
Tony Dold
Tony Abbott
Domitilla Raimondo



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Authors: Sinegugu Zukulu, Tony Dold, Tony Abbott and Domitilla Raimondo

Published by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)

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Copy-editing: Linette Ferreira (SANBI)

Design and layout: Sandra Turck (SANBI)

ISBN 978-1-919976-71-6

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Acknowledgments

We thank the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Avis for funding the research work required for this publication. The Botanical Society of South Africa (BOTSOC) is acknowledged for the generous sponsorship which made this publication possible. A special word of thanks to Prof. Neil Crouch for his assistance with plant species identification and to Graham Grieve for contributing the photograph of *Ursinia tenuiloba*.



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Participants



Ixhwele Dlamini

Mashona 'Sulamntwana' Wetu Dlamini lives in Sigidi village near the Mzamba River mouth in Pondoland. He is 78 years old and has 9 children and many grandchildren. His nickname 'Sulamntwana' means 'baby wiper' and is a sign of great respect to him. He comes from a family with a long tradition of herbalists (*amaXhwele*) where indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants was passed on from one generation to the next. This traditional family apprenticeship is called *ukushiywa nezikhwama zenyanga* meaning the tradition of 'inheriting medicinal bags' which refers to a small bag called *isikhwama* that is carried over the shoulder to hold medicinal plant material while collecting. When a person is accepted as an apprentice and undertakes to 'inherit the

'It is important to note that if we run out of these plants we would not be able to help people. It is wrong to harvest in bags; we should only take enough to treat or help people.'
Ixhwele Mashona 'Sulamntwana' Wetu Dlamini, Sigidi village.

medicinal bags' it is customary to pay respect to the teacher (a qualified diviner) by means of a gift (traditionally white beads were used but now money is acceptable) and offer a ritual sacrifice of a chicken, goat or cow to the ancestors. This form of respect is called *ukuchosiza* and ensures the success of the apprenticeship and, most importantly, is intended to gain the approval of the ancestors who guide and enlighten all traditional healers. Ixhwele Dlamini specialises in a number of fields of traditional healing including *ukuvala ingozi* (protection from danger), *inkrwiqila* (protection from witchcraft), *ukuvala izulu* (protection from lightning strikes) and *umbilini* (treatment of anxiety attacks). Ixhwele Dlamini provided the information for the plants numbered 1 – 15.

Inyanga Gampe

Samson 'Jakalas' Gampe also comes from Sigidi village near Mzamba. He is 83 years old and has 8 children with many grandchildren and a few great grandchildren. His nickname 'Jakalas' means *Jackal*, referring to his cunning healing skills. He is an *inyanga* (diviner) and his calling came from his ancestors through a dream. An unrelated elder in the village experienced a dream in which Inyanga Gampe's grandfather delivered a message, saying that he should stop working as a migrant worker because



'We are the custodians of nature, so let us protect it and make sure it will be there for future generations to use as well.'

Inyanga Samson 'Jakalas' Gampe, Sigidi village.



his gift is the *udlawu* (iron tool used to dig medicinal roots). Thereafter he learnt traditional healing from his ancestors through dreams and never undertook an apprenticeship. *Inyanga Gampe* provided the information for the plants numbered 16 – 30.

Umnumzana Shezi

Sizwe 'Mistoli' Shezi lives at Nyavini near the Mtentu River mouth. He is 48 years old and is married with children and grandchildren. He is not a herbalist, but has a broad knowledge of medicinal plants that he learnt from his father who was a herbalist. His father specialised in medicines related to weaning of children and he also has a reputation for this.

He now calls a great number of young girls and boys his 'children' after he helped wean them with his medicines.

Umnumzana Shezi is the lead dancer of a local traditional dance troupe called *Nyavini* and he is well known for his charm medicines used to help win dance competitions. *Umnumzana Shezi* provided the information for the plants numbered 31 – 37.



Umnumzana Danca

Mpondombini 'Sixteen' Danca is from eGobodweni village next to the Mtentu River Gorge and is 41 years old. Although he is not a practicing herbalist he has an excellent knowledge of medicinal plants that he learnt from his father and his grandparents. He is often employed by herbalists to collect medicinal plants in inaccessible places like the Mtentu River Gorge. *Umnumzana Danca* provided the information for the plants numbered 38 – 60.

Many of the medicinal uses referred to in this booklet have not been scientifically tested and cannot be guaranteed as safe. If medicinal plants are misidentified or misused, there is a danger of poisoning. It is recommended that you do not experiment with medicinal plants without seeking further advice, including accurate dosage instructions. The authors of this book cannot accept any responsibility for any medical problems suffered by readers as a consequence of experimenting with plants.

The Pondoland Centre of Plant Endemism

[illegible]



This is a place of wonder, delight and excitement. The deep, wide river gorges cut through the land with endless patterns of rock castles standing proud above their depths, which hold shady forests sheltering some of the rarest woody plant species in South Africa.

The Pondoland Centre has a very high number of plant species that are not found anywhere else in the world. These are called endemic species and thus the name Pondoland Centre of Plant Endemism—sometimes called the Pondoland Centre. It is estimated that the Pondoland Centre has as many as 180 endemic plant species with some of these being medicinal plants used by the amaMpondo living here. Many of the endemic plants have very small distributions within the Pondoland Centre and this makes them even more vulnerable to disturbance. Very little of the Pondoland Centre is conserved in nature reserves (Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve, Umtamvuna Nature Reserve and Mkambathi Nature Reserve) and areas outside of these reserves are under increasing pressure from agriculture, commercial forestry, overgrazing, excessive burning of the grassland and the proposed new toll road and mining activities.

The Pondoland Centre is an important part of the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany Hotspot. A Hotspot is one of the 'earth's biologically richest and most endangered eco-regions' and there are only 34 of them in the world. At 180 000 hectares it is one of the world's smallest Hotspots, and due to this it is very vulnerable to disturbance. The Pondoland Centre of Plant Endemism is named after the region that is historically the home of the amaMpondo who settled here in the late 16th century under the legendary King Faku.

The purpose of this book

The information of indigenous plant use in Pondoland, presented in this book, is primarily aimed at school pupils, but it will also be of interest to everyone interested in plants in the region. The South African public school curriculum gives some attention to the conservation of biological resources in the *Life Science* syllabus. For example Grade 10 learners are given lessons on *Environmental Studies* which emphasise the significance of biomes and diversity. The section on *Change and Continuity* covers plant diversity and conservation and the *Life Orientation* syllabus highlights citizenship education which includes *heritage studies*. The Grade 10 syllabus on *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Biotechnology* specifically covers indigenous medicinal plants and requires pupils to submit an assignment listing medicinal plants, their uses and their scientific botanical names—a tall order for pupils from rural schools. The primary focus of this book is not only to support scholars in these curriculum requirements, but it also aims to reawaken indigenous cultural knowledge and encourage the youth of Pondoland to engage with their unique biodiversity to ensure a sustainable future.

Meanings of names

The *isiMpondo* names by which plants are known in Pondoland, form a rich and valuable part of the region's linguistic heritage, providing fascinating insight into the traditional uses and the perceptions and beliefs associated with plants. Botanical names are either written in Latin or Greek and always comprise of a genus and a species name. Botanical names give clues about the nature of plants and sometimes their uses. In the same way as the name *umlungumabele* refers to the breast-like knobs on the bark of this tree, the Greek name *Zanthoxylum* refers to the yellow colour of the wood, *xanthos* means 'yellow' and *xylon* means 'wood.' An example of a botanical name referring to indigenous knowledge is that of the forest tree, *Strychnos baculum*, where *baculum* means 'walking stick' locally known as *umnonono*. This was based on a report that the Zulu King Mpande, who was half-brother to Shaka and Dingane and reigned from 1840 to 1872, had his regal walking stick carved from this tree.

Medicinal and charm plants

Like many ancient healing traditions, the amaMpondo have a broad, holistic approach to health care. Traditional Mpondo medicines and charms are called *amayeza* and include many plants used to treat a wide range of illnesses. It is also applied for cultural and religious purposes such as ritual purification, protection against witchcraft, execution of religious ceremonies, rituals and customs. Whereas Western health care is based on treating physical symptoms, many Mpondo people attribute disease and misfortune to metaphysical powers, which can be controlled with the correct use of *amayeza*. Misfortune and ill health are often believed to be caused by a breach of customs and traditions or by supernatural powers. Herbal remedies and charms are used in rituals to appease the ancestors, to protect against evil forces and to remove ritual impurity.

Sixty *amayeza* plants and their uses are described in this book and are based on information provided to Sinegugu Zukulu during interviews conducted with *Ixhwele* Mashona 'Sulamntwana' Wetu Dlamini, *Inyanga* Samson 'Jakalas' Gampe, *Umnumzana* Sizwe 'Mistoli' Shezi and *Umnumzana* Mpondombini 'Sixteen' Danca.



1. *IsiXhonxo* – *Gasteria croucheri* subsp. *pondoensis* (Natal Gasteria)

This plant grows up to 600 mm tall on cliffs and in bush clumps in both moist and dry places. The thick, smooth, triangular leaves are up to 500 mm long and 100 mm wide and form a rosette which can be up to 1 m across. The flowering stem can be up to 900 mm tall, horizontal or erect and is sparsely branched with many pale pink flowers.

Medicinal and cultural use

Isixhonxo is used as *intelezi*—for protection against lightning strikes and misfortune caused by witchcraft. Lightning is often used as a symbol for witchcraft (*ubugqwirha*). The freshly crushed leaves, sometimes mixed with other herbs, are soaked in a bucket or billycan (*ibhekile*) of water and stirred (*ukupehla*) before ritually spraying and splashing the mixture (*ukutshiza*) against the walls of the home and the cattle kraal (*ubuhlanti*).



Intelezi is also used as an emetic (*ukugabha*) to treat *isichitho*, which is a curse inflicted by jealous people to cause the victim to become less attractive or scorned by their partners. *Isichitho* is most often suspected when married couples or lovers separate without any obvious reason. Purging with *intelezi* is believed to remove the curse. *Intelezi* derives from the noun *Buthelezi*, meaning ‘slipperiness’ and refers to the ability of the medicine to make the user slippery (that is to get out of trouble). For example *lendlela ibuthelezi* means ‘this road is slippery.’



2. *Umkhupathi* – *Protorhus longifolia* (Red Beech)

This medium sized tree grows in almost any habitat. The stems are erect and the bark is smooth and light brown when young, becoming rough and dark brown with age. The parallel veined leaves are up to 150 mm long and 40 mm wide and look like mango leaves. Leaves are scattered on branches and there are usually a few bright red leaves present. It bears many flowers that are small with male and female flowers found on separate trees. The small mauve fruits look like tiny mangoes.

Medicinal and cultural use

The bark is used as an emetic during the ritual cleansing after a funeral. The ritual is called *ukuphothula* which means ‘wrapping up’ and usually takes place on the third day of the funeral activities. It is also used to treat diarrhoea that is often related to teething in babies. Treating diarrhoea in this way is called *ukusongela*. The bark is also used by young people to make themselves more attractive and to invite good fortune. This is called *isitsha*.



3. *Umhlaba, ikhala* – *Aloe ferox* (Bitter Aloe)

A small, erect tree with a wide cluster of succulent leaves up to 1.5 m across at the crown. Leaves are up to 1 m long and 150 mm wide. This plant usually grows in colonies on dry slopes. The old, dry leaves often form a protective blanket shielding the stem unless burnt or removed. The red or orange flowers occur in winter and are carried on several long spikes above the leaves.

Cultural use

Because of the thick 'slippery' sap in the leaves of *umhlaba* it is also used as *intelezi* (refer to plant No.1). *Intelezi* is also used for a ritual body wash called *ukuhlamba ngeyeza* that ensures ritual cleanliness (*impilo*) and prevents contamination that would cause ritual impurity (*umlaza*). Dry leaves are also used together with tobacco as snuff (*icuba lokugwada*). The dry leaf is first burnt until it becomes a glowing red-hot coal. The coal is extinguished with water and then ground into ash which is then mixed with coarse tobacco. From this activity comes the expression *lugwayi nentlaba*, meaning 'the tobacco and the aloe,' referring to two close friends.



4. *Ibhucu* – *Bulbine latifolia* (Broad-leaved Bulbine)

Ibhucu can be identified by its aloe-like growth. It has no stem and no sharp teeth occur on the leaves. The plant forms spreading rosettes up to 30 cm high and can be found in big or small colonies. The many small yellow flowers are carried on long flower stalks up to 1 m long. The fleshy roots are orange or yellow in colour.

Medicinal use

Ibhucu is used for cleansing 'dirty blood' (*igazi elimdaka*) caused by a poor diet consisting of fatty foods and excessive alcohol, but more importantly, it is used to remove powerful herbal medicines from the body by using the roots in an emetic or drunk as a tea. Some medicines are very strong and need to be removed from the body by purging after the required period of use.



5. *Umlungumabele* – *Zanthoxylum capense* (Small Knobwood)

A big tree that grows up to 30 m high in forest margins and bush clumps. The compound leaves smell strongly of citrus (oranges and lemons) when crushed. Flowers, small and numerous, are carried at the tips of branches. Male and female flowers are found on separate trees and are followed by small green fruits which change to dark orange when ripe.

Medicinal use

This is one of the most powerful medicinal plants in Pondoland. The bark is used to treat lower back pain (*isingqe*) and the roots are used for snake bite and erectile problems in men. An infusion of the leaves is used to treat influenza and fever. Powdered bark is used to treat toothache by rubbing the powder onto the aching tooth and gums. This will cause the tooth to

disintegrate piece by piece after which it can be removed. Healthy teeth can be damaged though, if care is not taken while applying this medicine. Before colonial times the name of this tree was called *uMnugumabele*, meaning 'thorns that resemble breasts.' After the arrival of European women in the country the name changed to *umlungumabele*, meaning 'white woman's breasts' because the large woody cone-shaped knobs on the bark resemble the breasts of a woman wearing a brassiere.



6. *Umkhuhlu* – *Trichilia dregeana* (Forest Mahogany)

A large tree found in moist forests with a dense spreading crown of dark, shiny, green leaves clustered towards the ends of the branches. The trunk has smooth grey bark, often roughly segmented at the base. The cream coloured flowers grow in dense clusters and produce large green fruits with black seeds, each with a red aril. Male and female flowers are found on separate trees.

Medicinal use

The bark is used to treat lower back pain (*isingqe*). *Umkhuhlu* trees that grow in forests have broad leaves and the medicine made from their bark is believed to be weaker than the medicine made from those growing at the edge of forests that always have much narrower leaves. The stronger specimens with narrow leaves are known locally as *inkunzi* (the bull) referring to its strength and the medicinal decoction made of *inkunzi* must be made weaker than *umkhuhlu*, because of its greater strength.



7. *Isiqungu sehlati* – *Dietes bicolor* (Peacock Flower)

The Peacock flower often forms dense clumps and grows up to 1 m high. The slender, pointed leaves are leathery and arranged in a fan-shaped pattern. The creamy-yellow flowers, about 60 mm across, have orange brown spots on the outer petals and are produced on stalks longer than the leaves. The fruits produce many seeds. The form from northern Pondoland is particularly attractive.

Medicinal use

This plant is used for ritual washing (*ukuhlamba ngeyeza*) after a death in the family. A decoction made from the roots is used to remove previously used, powerful medicines from the body. Powerful war charm medicines for example, must be 'removed from the blood' after the conflict is over. Failure to do this will leave the person short tempered and aggressive. *Isiqungu sehlati* is also used in the ritual cleansing of cattle a few days after a funeral.



8. *Ikhambi lokhakhayi* – *Syncolostemon rotundifolius* (Round-leaved Pink Plume)

This shrub is endemic to Pondoland and is found nowhere else. It is usually found growing in clumps along forest margins or in bush-clumps. It has many branches up to 1.8 m high and younger stems are velvety white in colour. The leaves are about 15 mm long and 12 mm wide and are often toothed towards the tips. The flowers are pink and grow at the tips of branches.

Medicinal use

It is used as an enema (*ukucima*) for babies who suffer from an affliction called *umkhondo* (refer to plant No. 20). Symptoms are a high temperature, opening of the anus and difficulty in staying awake.



9. *Umayime* – *Clivia robusta* (Pondo Clivia)

Another Pondoland endemic that grows up to 1.5 m high. It occurs in dense colonies in shady, damp places. The hairless leaves are up to 1 m long and 50 mm wide and clasp the base of the plant, forming a short false stem. The clusters of hanging orange flowers, each with a green tip, grow on stalks nearly as long as the leaves. These are followed by fleshy red fruits.



Medicinal and cultural use

Umayime is used as an emetic to treat a person who had a close encounter with a lightning strike. Experiencing a close lightning strike (*betwe lizulu*) is terrifying for anyone and the *amaMpondo* often associate lightning with witchcraft. Even the smell of a ground strike is believed to be harmful and *umayime* should be administered immediately. An infusion of the roots is also used as a ritual spraying (*ukutshiza*) of the home and cattle kraal (*ubuhlanti*) to protect the family against evil spirits

and witchcraft (*ubuthakathi*).

It is also one of the charm medicines used to make the mixture called *intelezi* that is sprayed around the homestead as protection against lightning strikes.

Umayime derives from the word *yima*, meaning 'to stop or block.'



10. *Inqubebe, Inqubela – Merwillia plumbea* (Large Blue Scilla)

There are two forms of this plant – the larger form grows in large colonies in wetlands and swamps, while the other smaller plant grows on rocky outcrops. The first form used to be called *Scilla natalensis* (Large Blue Squill) and has a large bulb with a basal rosette of leaves up to 300 mm long and 150 mm wide. The 10 mm diameter, blue flowers are held on erect stalks above the basal leaves. The smaller form, previously called *Scilla kraussii* (Dwarf Scilla), has small bulbs which form tight clusters on rocky places and has basal erect leaves up 75 mm long. The blue flowers are held on stalks about 250 mm long.

Cultural use

The bulb is pulped and mixed with water to make a foamy concoction. It was traditionally used as soap before commercial soaps became available. In some places people still use it to save on the cost of expensive commercial soap when washing big blankets. The wet blankets are spread out next to the river and rubbed thoroughly with the bulb before rinsing. *Inqubebe* is also used as *intelezi* by young men (*amabhungu*) when they go out as a group to their gatherings, for example traditional dance competitions (*umtshotsho*). The competition is fierce and charm medicines are often used to strengthen dancers and to weaken competitors. *Inqubebe* is also used to protect the dancers from charm medicines used against them by competing teams.



11. *Umphumelezi, Umphumeleli – Macaranga capensis* (River Macaranga)

This tall 25 m forest tree often loses its leaves in winter and grows in moist forest often near streams. The erect trunk is smooth and light grey in colour. The large, drooping leaves are 3–5 veined from the base and are clustered at the end of branches. The creamy coloured flowers are carried in sprays and are followed by small round, green fruits which split open to release single seeds. Male and female flowers are found on separate trees.



Medicinal use

An infusion of the bark is used as an emetic (*ukugabha*) as well as a steam treatment (*ukugquma*) by young men to make themselves attractive to the opposite sex. This treatment is called *isitsha*, meaning ‘to attract attention.’ It is believed that the medicine causes the blood to ‘run faster’ becoming ‘hot’ and

thus cleansing the body and improving the complexion. The same steam treatment is also used to prevent and eliminate misfortune. *Impumelelo* means ‘success.’



12. *Umgadankawu*, *Umnebelele* – *Albizia adianthifolia* (Flatcrown)

This is a straight, large tree up to 20 m tall. It is a short-lived pioneer tree and can be found in most habitats. It is deciduous and has a widely spreading crown that loses all its leaves in winter. The bark is grey and finely segmented and the leaves, up to 400 mm long, have 6–15 pairs of leaflets. The flowers, carried in masses, appear leaves in spring and make the branches droop. The flowers are followed by large hanging seed pods up to 190 mm long.

Medicinal use

The bark is used as a steam treatment (*ukugquma*) and an emetic (*ukugabha*) to ensure good fortune by people seeking employment for example. The same medicine is also used to treat sexually transmitted infections (STI's) such as pubic lice (*iintwala zehagu*). *Umgadankawu* derives from *ukugada*, meaning 'to guard' and *inkawu* meaning 'monkey.'



13. *Ibhulu* – *Senecio rhyncholaenus*

A shrub that grows in rocky grassland reaching up to 60 cm high. It has finely divided and toothed, sticky leaves and the branched, flowering stems bear many small cream coloured flower heads held either in clumps or in open clusters. There is no English common name, but the Afrikaans common name, *ruikbossie*, means 'smelly bush' and refers to the sweet smell of the leaves.

Cultural use

The most common and widely practiced use of this plant is to protect the homestead from being struck by lightning. At the onset of a thunderstorm a handful of dried leaves, kept especially for this purpose, are burnt on a bed of coals in the belief that the smoke will drive away lightning. In the event of a person having a close encounter with a lightning strike it can be used to treat the traumatised patient. In the past nursing mothers would

always sit on a mat of *ibhulu* leaves to ensure the child's steady growth and development.

Traditionally it was used as an emetic to treat a family who had been visited by a chief. In past times a chief seldom visited the homestead of a commoner and such a visit would be very stressful for the family. The family would use *ibhulu* as an emetic to alleviate this stress (*uvalo*).



14. *Umayibophe wehlathi* – *Acridocarpus natalitius* (Moth-fruit)

A robust forest canopy climber with stems reaching up to 12 m high. The bark is grey and forms large ridges with corky segments when older. The twisted climbing tips of the branches have short reddish hairs. The golden yellow flowers—a striking feature on forest canopies, are followed by winged fruits.

Medicinal use

A small piece of the root is chewed and spat out in a custom called *ukuchila* to protect oneself from lightning strikes during a storm. Following traditional custom all family members, seated on the floor inside the home, spit towards the doorway believing that this action will prevent lightning from striking the home. This is done while *ibhulu* (see plant No.13) is burning on the coals in the fireplace as an additional protective strategy. The name derives from *ukubopha*, meaning ‘to knot or tie up,’ and *ihlathi*, means ‘forest.’



15. *Umguza, Isigqiki-somkhovu – Encephalartos natalensis* (Natal Cycad)

A cycad that grows on cliffs, in bush clumps and in forests, usually singly or occasionally in small populations of up to 10 plants. The leaves, up to 2 m long, are clustered at the head of the tree and have many smooth leathery leaflets usually with a few teeth. The basal leaflets are reduced to sharp spines. The narrow male and massive female cones are carried on different plants.

Cultural use

In Pondoland *imiguza* trees are sometimes grown around the homestead as a charm to ward off lightning and evil forces. The use of protective charms to protect a home in this way is called *ukubethelela* which means 'strengthening the homestead.' *Isigqiki* means 'chair' and *umkhovu* means 'zombie,' in other words 'the chair of a zombie.'



16. *Umphondongozi, Isiqhobo* – *Eriosemopsis subanisophylla* (Eriosemopsis)

A resprouting grassland plant with a deep woody rootstock growing up to 60 cm high. The opposite leaves are about 50 mm long and 35 mm wide and are leathery and hairy with distinct veins. The flowers are cream coloured, about 12 mm across, and grow on stalks about 20 mm long that are attached in the axils of the leaves. Flowers are followed by cream to green coloured, round fruits.



Medicinal use

The roots are used in preparations such as *isiqokombiso* and *imbiza* for men. These are mixtures of various herbs that are used for male impotence. *Imbiza* means 'pot' and refers to the preparation of the medicines in a traditional clay pot (replaced by a three legged cast iron pot). The roots are also used in another mixture for women who suffer from infertility. This process of helping a woman to get pregnant is called *ukumisela*.



17. *Umhlondlo* – *Berkheya setifera* (Buffalo-tongue Berkheya)

A perennial grassland plant up to 1.2 m tall that grows in groups. The basal leaves, with entire or slightly lobed margins, are up to 550 mm long and 100 mm wide. Leaves are green on both surfaces and covered with coarse bristles. Flowering stems are sparsely branched and each branch bears a single flower.

Medicinal use

Umhlondlo is used in a preparation (*imbiza*) to treat menstrual pains caused by witchcraft. It is believed that the Puff Adder (*irhashu*) witch familiar (a spirit that usually appears in animal form and acts as an assistant to a witch or wizard) is used by jealous men to cause menstrual pain and even infertility in a woman who has rejected his romantic advances. The symptoms are known as 'pains of the Puff Adder' (*isilumo serhashu*). The decoction made from the roots is used to kill the 'Puff Adder' that is believed to have grown inside the victim's womb.



18. *AmaFuthomhlaba* – *Callilepis laureola* (Ox-eye Daisy)

This perennial herb grows up to 600 mm high and occurs in large colonies in grassland. The leaves are smooth, 3-veined and about 60 mm long and 20 mm wide. The flowers are usually solitary, about 60 mm across, and have a blackish centre surrounded by white ray florets.

Medicinal use

The roots are chewed to relieve stomach problems such as stomach cramps and indigestion. In the case of food poisoning, the medicine is administered as an enema (*ukucima*) or emetic (refer to plant No. 24).



19. *Umaphipha* – *Rapanea melanophloeos* (Cape Beech)

A tree up to 20 m tall that grows in forest, along forest margins and in bush clumps. The trunk is greyish brown and usually very straight. The dark green leaves, up to 150 mm long and 50 mm wide, are light green below and are clustered towards the ends of the short branches which bear the scars of fallen leaves. The many small creamy coloured flowers are densely clustered along the branches. The small, round fruits, about 8 mm across, are purple when ripe.

Medicinal use

The bark is used as an emetic (*ukugabha*) and a steam treatment (*ukugquma* or *ukuzipheka*) is used to treat an affliction called *isidina*. The symptoms of *isidina* are characterized by a person being rejected by members of the opposite sex. *Isidina* is believed to be caused by witchcraft. The steam treatment causes sweating and increased blood circulation that gives the patient a fresh clean look. The patient then becomes attractive to the opposite sex, a condition called *isitsha* (refer to plant No. 2). The treatment, therefore, removes *isidina* and restores *isitsha*. *Umaphipha* is also used as *intelezi* to protect the homestead from evil spirits (refer to plant No.1). *Umaphipha* derives from *ukuphipha*, meaning 'to clean or wipe.'



20. *Ikhambi lasemphahlane* – *Syncolostemon densiflorus* (Pink Plume)

This is a much branched shrub reaching 1.8 m high with velvety white, young stems. It grows in colonies along forest margins or in bush clumps. The leaves, up 15 mm long and 12 mm wide, are often toothed towards the apex and are in clusters along the stems. Pink flowers are carried in dense spikes at the tips of branches.

Medicinal use

According to *Inyanga* Samson Gampe, the leaves are used as an enema to treat fever and flu symptoms in infants and an affliction called *umkhondo*. The symptoms of *umkhondo* are excessive tiredness, a slight depression of the fontanel (*ufoboti*) and the opening of the anus. The plant is also used to help remove the first stool of an infant (meconium) and is used as an emetic by adults to attain a state of physical and metaphysical health, called *impilo*. In order to achieve *impilo* one must remove 'pollution' (*umlaza*) by purging.



21. *Iphamba* – *Polystachya pubescens* (Hairy-lipped *Polystachya*)

This is a perennial, epiphytic succulent herb up to 160 mm tall. It is commonly found on rocks, but also on trees in full sun or shade. Leaves are up to 100 mm long and 17 mm wide, growing from clustered pseudo-bulbs. Flowers are yellow with thin red stripes and are strongly scented.

Medicinal use

Iphamba is used as a steam treatment (*ukugquma*) when faced with difficult situations such as court cases or prolonged misfortune believed to be caused by witchcraft. True to its name the use of *iphamba* deflects and confuses evil forces when including it in an *intelezi* mixture that is

splashed and sprayed around the home. Similarly, using the plant ensures that court procedures will be confused through loss of evidence and statements and will eventually lead to the dismissal of the case. *Iphamba* is also used to guard against lightning strikes. It is believed that sorcerers are able to control and direct lightning towards their victims and *iphamba* is used to 'confuse' or divert lightning strikes away from its intended victims. *Iphamba* derives from *ukuphamba*, meaning 'to dodge or outwit.'



22. *Umhlandlamfitho* – *Pteridium aquilinum* (Bracken Fern)

This large, rambling fern can grow to 4 m tall if supported by trees. It can form large colonies in grassland or along forest margins and often grows in disturbed areas. Fronds can be as long as 1.5 m with pinnae (leaflets) to 450 mm. The frond stipe (stalk) can be straw coloured or reddish in colour.

Medicinal use

This fern is used to facilitate an easy, trouble-free childbirth. A decoction of the roots, often mixed with other herbs, is taken orally during painful and extended labour. It is believed that witchcraft may be responsible for such difficulties. In the event of prolonged labour (*ukulunywa*), a fire is built in the room to cause the mother to sweat profusely in the belief that this will hasten the birth and therefore limit complications.



23. *Igwaqani* – *Watsonia densiflora* (Natal Watsonia)



This is a robust geophyte (a plant that has an underground storage organ) that grows in close clumps in large colonies in grassland. The leaves are up to 1.2 m long and 15 mm wide with thickened middle veins and margins. Pink (very rarely white) flowers grow in compact spikes, each flower has brown bracts (reduced leaves) that extend below. Each individual plant grows from a bulb covered by a thread-like covering.

Medicinal use

The corms are crushed to make a dough-like substance that is heated and used as glue. This glue is used to fasten spear blades onto their wooden handles. Once the glue has set it is



further strengthened with a covering of hide taken from the tail of a cow. In Pondoland there are a number of differently named spears that are used for various purposes. For example, each family has a ceremonial spear that is used only for ritual sacrifices (*ukuxhela*) and often also an additional spear kept for defence purposes. Diviners in training (*abakhwetha bamagqirha*) always carry a ceremonial spear as a symbol of their social status. The bulbs are also used in a mixture called *umsongelo wabantwana*. This means to 'wrap up' (the stomach) of babies and is used to treat diarrhoea in babies.



24. *Umsintsi* – *Erythrina caffra* (Coast Coral-tree)

A medium sized tree that grows to 18 m high with thickened branches, sometimes with prickles. It occurs in coastal forest and along rivers and is now widely planted in all habitats. The bark is pale grey with scattered lengthwise ridges. These trees are deciduous and lose their trifoliolate leaves in winter when they produce large heads of bright red flowers.

Medicinal use

Decoctions of the roots and bark are used to treat toothache, stomach cramps and epileptic fits. It is commonly believed that stomach ache and cramps are inflicted by a person wishing to harm you. This can be done by secretly poisoning the food or by means of witchcraft. The effect of food poisoning is called *idliso* and the effect of poisoning through witchcraft is called *idliso lomoya* (literally poisoning of the spirit). This is done while the victim is asleep. Often the victim will remember a dream in which he or she has eaten poisoned food and on waking can still taste and smell the poison. Purging with *umsintsi* medicine removes both physical and metaphysical poison.



25. *Ibhayi-lam* – *Crassula pellucida*

A perennial succulent herb that grows in grassland along forest margins or on rocks where it forms a mat. The stems spread along the ground and the leaves grow up to 25 mm long and 12 mm wide. The leaves are sometimes hairy and the flowers are white or pale pink in colour.

Medicinal and charm use

Ibhayi-lam was used in past times as a war charm and applied as a wash (*intelezi* mixture). The plant was chopped up with other medicines and charms and soaked overnight in water. The mixture causes the skin to itch and this state of extreme irritability is believed to make the warrior aggressive and to heighten the senses. The discomfort is increased by sweating in battle. Warriors, having used this war medicine, were forbidden to be in the presence of women or to eat pork as it was believed that the strength of the medicine would be compromised by both. *Ibhayi-lam* means 'my blanket.'



26. *Undiyaza, Undiyandiya – Bersama swinnyi* (Coastal White Ash)

A small tree, usually larger in forests than along forest margins and on rocky outcrops. The stems are tall and slender or short and broad with roughish brown bark. The very variable leaves are 70 mm to 350 mm long and have 4–7 pairs of leaflets and a terminal one. The flowers are greenish white in colour and are clustered in spikes at the tips of branches; spikes are hairy and cone-shaped. The fruits are woody capsules which split open to reveal the orange seeds.

Medicinal use

Undiyaza is used in an *intelezi* mixture that is sprinkled around the homestead at the onset of a thunderstorm to protect it against lightning strikes. During summer when storms are frequent, the mixture is made by soaking *undiyaza* and other *intelezi* herbs in a bucket of cold water and stored in readiness for the next storm. While the medicine is in storage it is important that it is not exposed to human contact, particularly to menstruating women, as it is believed that its powers can easily be destroyed in this way. The charm medicine is splashed and sprinkled with a leafy branch around the homestead and cattle kraal. The application, called *ukuchela*, is done by men and only if necessary by young girls or old women so that there is no chance of contamination. This precaution applies to all medicine at all times. *Undiyaza* means ‘to be confused.’



27. *Inyazangoma* – *Secamone alpine* (Russet Secamone)

A slender climber found along forest margins and on rocky outcrops. The stems are long and have tendrils. Opposite leaves are up to 90 mm long and 35 mm wide. The cream coloured flowers are very small and fruits are in pairs of pods.

Medicinal use

People suffering from upper back pain, called *isibhobo*, are treated with *inyazangoma*. A piece of the root is placed on burning coals and the patient inhales the smoke which immediately reduces the pain. It is also used in a ritual called *ukutshisela* that is performed in the kraal to protect livestock against sickness and witchcraft. A number of plants are collected and burnt on a fire in the centre of the kraal to ensure that the walls of the kraal are exposed to the smoke. A leafy vine of the same plant is tied above and across the entrance to the kraal so that cattle pass below it each time they leave and return. It is believed that the plant keeps evil forces away and ensures that the herd is healthy. Cattle owners who use this charm medicine usually keep their herds separate from unprotected herds to avoid contamination.



28. *Isiqalaba* – *Protea caffra* (Common Sugarbush)

A very variable plant that can grow either as a resprouting bush in grassland, where it can grow to 1.2 m tall, or as a small grassland tree up to 5 m tall. The tree form has stems with thick dark-brown bark but the leaves, up 170 mm long and 30 mm wide, are similar in both forms.

Medicinal use

A decoction made of *Isiqalaba* and other herbs is administered to treat babies suffering from an affliction called *iqabaza*, that is diagnosed by the child's hair turning reddish brown in colour and by bloody stools. The roots are also used to make a decoction called *umhlabelo* that is applied to heal broken bones. It is highly regarded and often used in conjunction with western medicine to speed up the healing process.



29. *Umhlontlo* – *Euphorbia triangularis* (River Euphorbia)

A spiny succulent tree up to 8 m tall. The stem is pale grey and carries a cluster of branches towards the top. The yellow-green, segmented branches are held curved upwards and form a crown up to 2 m in diameter. The flowers are yellow-green in colour and occur in clumps along the angles of the branches. The fruits are 3-lobed capsules up to 8 mm in diameter.

Cultural use

Umhlontlo is known as the tree of the twins. When twins are born in Pondoland, two *imihlontlo* saplings are collected from the forest and transplanted behind the homestead. The baby twins' bath water is always used to water the *imihlontlo* trees. A special relationship is believed to exist between the twins and the two plants. The growth of these *imihlontlo* is supposed to coincide with the growth of the twins. If the children are of the same size, the trees grow to an equal height; if one of the twins

is short in stature, his tree will likewise be stunted in growth. In the same way these trees indicate the state of health of the twins. If one of the trees become weak or is in danger of dying, people assume that its owner too, is ill and even if the owner is away from home, his or her relatives will know that he or she is probably already ill. In the event of one twin dying, his or her *umhlontlo* is removed. When the twins become sick, the roots of their specific *umhlontlo* tree are prepared and used as a body wash. Should either of the twins die, so would their *imihlontlo* trees. In the event of one twin dying the surviving twin will lie down next to the grave momentarily as a sign of respect to the deceased. This tree is admired and respected amongst all Nguni people, such that amongst the Xhosa, if the tree is damaged and oozes milky sap, a silver coin or a few white beads must be given to tree as a gesture of apology.



30. *Umayisake obomvu* – *Thesium pallidum* (Yellow Thesium)

A perennial shrub that grows up to 500 mm high with erect angular stems. It occurs in grasslands and in rocky places. The leaves are very narrow and up to 30 mm long. The small flowers are held in clusters and the fruits are oval and prominently ridged. The entire plant is pale yellow-green, therefore the specific name *pallidum*, meaning 'pale' in Latin.

Medicinal use

It is used as a love charm and is one of the most popular charm medicines in Pondoland. The roots are crushed and boiled in water and used as a body wash or a steam treatment and a purgative by both men and women. It is believed that these treatments increase a person's attractiveness by improving the complexion and sexual appeal by keeping the blood 'warm.' The name derives from the word *ukusaka* meaning 'defeated.'



31. *Ingcolo* – *Dioscorea dregeana* (Wild Yam)

This vigorous climbing vine grows to 15 m high in forests and bush clumps. It has large, shiny green trifoliate leaves with leaflets up to 100 mm long. The flowers are white and the fruits are winged capsules pale green in colour.

Cultural uses

Root and tuber crops such as *amabhatata* (*Ipomoea batatas*, sweet potato) and *amadumbe* (*Colocasia esculenta*, cocoyam) are commonly grown in Pondoland but are plagued by moles (*intukuzi*) that eat them. One way to ensure the eradication of moles is to grow poisonous *ingcolo* in the fields and home gardens together with crops.



32. *Igulen* – *Bowiea volubilis* subsp. *volubilis* (Climbing Lily)

A succulent climber that grows from a large, partially exposed, light green bulb. It can grow up to 3 m high and the soft, many-branched and bright green succulent stems form a tangled mass. It bears small green flowers.

Medicinal use

This plant is becoming very rare because people collect it for medicinal purposes wherever they find it. The medicine made from the bulb is used as a steam treatment, a body wash and a purgative to treat a sexually transmitted disease called *intwala zehagu* (literally meaning 'pig lice' but referring to pubic lice). *Intwala zehagu* is believed to be caused by witchcraft (*isichitho*, a spell or curse) and is transmitted through sexual intercourse. The spell is often attributed to jealousy. The steam treatment and body wash removes the pubic lice and the purging counteracts the spell.



33. *Umathunga* – *Eucomis autumnalis* (Pineapple Flower)

This perennial plant grows up to 50 cm tall and occurs in wet grassland. It has wavy basal leaves up to 500 mm long and 80 mm wide. Pale yellow-green flowers are borne on erect inflorescence resembling a pineapple and are followed by pale green seed capsules.

Medicinal use

A decoction of the bulb, often mixed with chicken gravy to improve the taste, is used to treat broken limbs in both people and animals, hence the name meaning 'sewing together.' Another important use of this medicine is to treat a cattle sickness called *umkhonyane*. If cattle are accidentally let out of the kraal to graze in the morning before the dew dries on the grass, particularly during the rainy season, they may contract *umkhonyane* characterized by a loss of appetite and by limping, usually of the forelegs. A decoction of *uMathunga* is given to the animal through the mouth. The name *umathunga* derives from *ukuthunga*, meaning 'to sew or repair something broken.'



34. *Umqhwetayo* – *Morella serrata* (Lance-leaved Waxberry)

This is a densely leaved 2 m tall shrub growing in colonies in damp grassland. The shrub usually has several erect stems. The leaves, about 80 mm long, are narrow and toothed, tapering at the base and apex. Flowers are carried on spikes in the leaf axils and are followed by tiny blue-black fruits with a waxy surface.

Medicinal use

It is used to treat chest related problems such as asthma, coughing and shortness of breath, generally called *isifuba*. A decoction of the root tastes like ginger and causes an itchy throat called *ukuqhweta*, therefore the name *umqhwetayo* meaning 'the itchy one.' The root is also mixed with salt and alum granules (bought from a pharmacy) and taken up to three times daily. This mixture is called *isiphungo*, meaning 'that which is swallowed.' Sometimes *isifuba* is attributed to witchcraft and is treated by using *umqhwetayo* as a purgative to remove the spell (*idliso*).



35. *Umnyamathi* – *Loxostylis alata* (Tarwood)

A small tree up to 7 m tall found on rocks, along forest margins and in bush clumps. The dark brown bark of the stem is roughly segmented. The leaves are compound with 2–6 pairs of small leaflets and one terminal one. In spring the young leaves are red. Flowers are small and white in colour with male and female flowers on separate trees; female flowers form fruits surrounded by red sepals.

Medicinal use

The bark is used by young men for *isitsha*, that is to make themselves more attractive to the opposite sex. A well liked person is said to have *isitsha*, while an unpopular person is said to have *isidina*. The unfortunate state of *isidina* is treated by steaming with *umnyamathi* bark. The attractive red colour of the new spring leaves of the tree alludes to this process of renewal. The bark is also used as a purgative to facilitate and interpret dreams that are believed to be the means of communication with the ancestors.



36. *Isimonya* – *Graderia scabra* (Pink Ground-bells)

A perennial 600 mm tall, small shrub found in grassland. The erect stems are sometimes hairy and grow from a woody rootstock. The hairy toothed leaves are about 40 mm long and 15 mm wide. The showy flowers are pink and sometimes red in colour.

Medicinal use

Isimonya is popular with boys when they first become interested in girls of the same age and begin to compete for their attention. An increased popularity with the opposite sex is called *isitsha* (refer to plant No. 35) and the beautiful flower and sweet smelling roots of *isimonya* allude to this attracting of attention. The roots are chewed and the saliva is rubbed onto the hands and face in the same way and with the same purpose as perfume.



37. *Uvalo* – *Muraltia lancifolia* (Purple Heath)

A many stemmed erect shrub up to 400 mm tall that grows in grassland. The stems are hairy and the spine-tipped leaves are about 10 mm long. The pale pink to white coloured flowers are 10 mm across.

Medicinal use

Similar to *isimonya* (plant No. 36), *uvalo* is also used to attract the attention of the opposite sex. The whole plant is boiled as a steam treatment or used as a wash in the belief that the user will overwhelm his or her chosen friend with good looks and charm. *Uvalo* means ‘to be struck by nervousness’ and refers to the surprise that the medicine can cause when used to enhance the user’s looks and charm.



38. *Umayibophe wesiganga* – *Pentanisia angustifolia*

A grassland herb up to 600 mm tall with loose green stems. The shiny, hairless opposite leaves are about 50 mm long and 10 mm wide. The flowers are pale blue to purple in colour.

Medicinal use

The name *umayibophe* indirectly refers to the ability of this charm medicine to 'tie-up' the anger of a person and to ensure warmth and friendliness. The stem and leaves are chewed and the saliva is rubbed onto the face. Boys use *umayibophe* when they arrive late for class at school so that the teacher will not be angry with them. Similarly young herders will use *uMayibophe* to avoid punishment if their cattle get into a mielie field and damage the crop while they are not watching. Adults also use *umayibophe*, for example when visiting a family to discuss the dowry (*lobola*) in the hope of a suitable agreement. The name *umayibophe* comes from the *ukubopha* meaning 'to tie-up.'



39. *Idangabani* – *Commelina africana* (Yellow Commelina)

A flat, low-growing herb with spreading stems found in grassland. Leaves are either folded or open and can be 120 mm long. The yellow flowers that close during the middle of the day, are more or less 15 mm across and appears in sequence from a larger protecting sheath.

Medicinal use

Boys entering puberty are often troubled with pimples, called *ukukhahlela* or *ikhambi*. The leaves and stems of *idangabani* are crushed and applied to the face to treat and prevent pimples.



40. *Isiqhuziso* – *Pityrogramma calomelanos* (Golden Fern)

This fern reaches up to 500 mm growing in clumps in a variety of habitats, usually moist and disturbed areas. The leaf stalks are purple-black and the leaves are golden-yellow. The plant, from South America, was introduced to South Africa for decorative purposes and has now become naturalized.

Medicinal use

In Pondoland a number of charm medicines are burnt to ensure healthy cattle by exposing the animals to the smoke of smouldering leaves or bark. This treatment is called *ukuqhuzisa* (literally ‘to make smoke’) and the plants are called *iziqhuziso* which means ‘smokers.’

Examples of the use of these charm medicines include treating the herd immediately after a funeral to prevent the cattle from becoming sick; preventing baboons from entering the kraal and drinking milk from the cows’ udders; preventing accidents and misfortune such as cows falling off cliffs and to ensure the general health and well-being of the herd. Different charm medicines are used at different times of the year for different purposes. *Isiqhuziso* is used at the beginning of winter when cattle are allowed into the fields to eat the old maize stalks. When this happens, cattle from a number of herds come into close contact with each other and may be exposed to disease and sickness. This herb is used to prevent any infection at this time.



41. *Indendekwani* – *Maesa lanceolata* (False Assegai)

A small 5 m tall tree occurring in open habitats, along forest margins and in bush clumps. The stems are usually branched low down and have rough grey-brown bark. The toothed leaves are broadly elliptic, about 150 mm long and 100 mm wide and expose dark red sap where a leaf is broken off. Cream coloured flowers are carried in large branched clusters and are followed by cream to white coloured fruits.

Medicinal use

It is used to treat internal worms in children. A decoction of the fruits and leaves is mixed with sour milk (*amasi*) to improve the taste and given to children to expel the worms.



42. *Intsentsela* – *Cyperus solidus* (Giant Sedge)

A robust perennial sedge up to 1.5 m tall, growing in colonies along drainage lines and damp places. The leaves are up to 1.5 m long and 15 mm wide, the margins and lower midrib are finely saw-toothed. The erect stems bear brown flower heads.

Medicinal use

In traditional Mpondo culture it is very important that newly married couples have children soon after their marriage and when this does not happen it causes great concern in the family. This is most often believed to be the responsibility of the wife who looks to traditional medicine to overcome the problem. A decoction of the rhizome of *intsentsela* is used to treat infertility.



43. *Uqontsi* – *Eriosema salignum* (Narrow-leaved Eriosema)

This plant grows in grassland and has an erect, single stem. It grows to 400 mm tall and has narrow trifoliate leaves and yellow flowers.

Medicinal use

As with *intsentsela* (plant No. 42) this plant is also used to treat infertility. However, *intsentsela* is used when the problem is believed to be of natural causes, while *uqontsi* is used when the problem is believed to be caused by witchcraft—often as a result of jealousy. The roots of *intsentsela* and *uqontsi* are therefore mixed to make a medicine to both overcome witchcraft and to increase the chances of conceiving. It is believed that the appearance of the *uqontsi* root, used for the medicine, will determine the gender of the child. If the root is branched the child will be a girl and if unbranched, it will be a boy.



44. *Uzeneke* – *Haemanthus albiflos* (White Paint Brush)

An evergreen bulbous plant up to 400 mm tall that grows in shady places. It has smooth and fleshy, drooping leaves with a fringe of small white hairs along the margins. The white flowers are carried in compact heads that look like a paint brushes, therefore the English common name. The round fruits are 10 mm in diameter and are pale green to red in colour.

Medicinal use

In Mpondo culture it is acceptable for a man to have as many mistresses (*amadikazi*) as his financial capacity may allow. It is expected that he supports his mistresses financially. These relationships are often made difficult by jealous people who use witchcraft or sorcery to undermine the *amadikazi*. This involves using charm medicines called *ubuthi* or 'dark medicines.' *Uzeneke* is used to counteract these dark medicines. It is important that women should use a plant that has a small, young leaf emerging from the bulb, while men should use a plant with fully grown leaves. *Uzeneke* derives from *ukuzeneka* meaning 'to expose,' referring to the spreading leaves.



45. *Umashiqolo* – *Osteospermum imbricatum* (*Osteospermum*)

This multi-stemmed perennial shrub are found in rocky places and dry grassland. The plants occur in widespread colonies. The leaves are up to 50 mm long, are thick and leathery and decrease in size higher up on the stem. The flower heads are yellow.

Medicinal use

A decoction of the root is used as an emetic to treat *inyongo* which is caused by a build up of bile caused by excessive fatty foods, tea and coffee, causing headaches, biliousness, dizziness, vomiting, coughing and chest complaints. *Inyongo* is understood by most patients to be simply a build-up of gall in the stomach that needs to be expelled and it is treated by purging. *Umashiqolo* derives from the word *shiqolo* meaning 'strong' or 'powerful.'



46. *Icikamlilo* – *Pentanisia prunelloides* (Broad-leaved *Pentanisia*)

A multi-stemmed grassland herb often trailing in the grass or erect to 500 mm tall. The leaves are without stalks, are narrow and usually hairless. The blue flowers are borne in heads on stalks above the leaves.

Medicinal use

Icikamlilo is used to treat retained afterbirth in cattle. Diseases and deficiencies in cattle can cause the retention of the placenta (afterbirth), called *umgcantsi*, which can further cause contamination of the uterus, sickness and even death. In the event of retained afterbirth, the cow is given a decoction of the root of *icikamlilo* to expel the placenta. Another plant, also used for this purpose, is the soft upper stem of *ikhamanga* (*Strelitzia nicolai*). *Icikamlilo* root is used to prevent and treat infection of open wounds in humans. The healing of broken limbs is assisted by applying a hot bandage, made of the plant, onto the limb. This treatment is called *ukuthoba*. *Icikamlilo* means ‘to extinguish a flame.’



47. *Umhlondlo* – *Berkheya speciosa* (Showy Berkheya)

A perennial herb found in grasslands, up to 1.4 m tall. It is widespread and common in early summer. It can be distinguished from the similar species, *Berkheya setifera*, in that the basal leaves are white below and its flowers are a lighter yellow.

Medicinal use

Umhlondlo leaves are used as a bandage to stop bleeding of a wound. The white underside of the leaf is soft and porous and, when peeled off and applied to the wound, absorbs the blood and causes clotting. The bandage sticks firmly to the wound until it is removed with warm water. The green part of the leaf is also useful and is chewed by shepherds and herdsmen to treat stomach cramps when they are far away from home. Like most traditional medicines that are used to treat stomach cramps, *umhlondlo* is extremely bitter tasting.



48. *Imfinda* – *Boophone disticha* (Poison bulb)

This plant flowers in early spring and has a large bulb half exposed above the ground and covered with soft papery scales. It occurs and is widespread in grassland. The leaves form a fan-like arrangement and are up to 450 mm long and 50 mm wide. The sweetly scented, red flowers are carried on thick stalks in the form of large ball-like inflorescence. When the flower clusters (inflorescences) dries and falls off the plant it rolls along the ground like a ball in the wind and disperses its seeds in this way.

Medicinal use

A small quantity of the poisonous bulb is used to treat people with psychological problems (*amageza*), and specifically a culturally related mental illness, called *umafufunyana*. *Umafufunyana* is believed to be possession by evil spirits. The patient may become aggressive and unpredictable and may need to be restrained. An herbalist or diviner will prescribe the use of *imfinda* administered by means of an enema to treat the patient.



49. *Isijejisa sabantwana* – *Schizocarpus nervosus* (White Scill)

A small geophyte up to 400 mm tall. The bulb, covered with coarse bulb scales, is below the ground. The leaves are leathery and sometimes twisted and grow at the same time as the flowers. The flowering stem is erect or lax with a spike of white flowers.

Medicinal use

A decoction of the root is given to an infant to expel the meconium (first stool). It is believed that if the stool is not removed as soon as possible after birth, the child will suffer from a condition called *ipleyti*. Symptoms of *ipleyti* are a sunken fontanel and white pimple-like ulcers in the mouth. A sunken fontanel is called *inyoni* and the medicine for treating this is called *umuthi wenyoni*, meaning ‘medicine for a little bird’ referring to the fragile infant. *Isijejisa sabantwana* is also used to expel the meconium in new born calves and is used in the form of an enema to deworm calves and goats.



50. *Umarhedeni* – *Gnidia kraussiana* (Lesser Yellow Head)

A grassland herb up to 500 mm tall with many single stems. It is prominent in recently burnt grassland. The leaves are greyish-green and hairy and the sweetly scented yellow flowers grow in terminal ball-like flower clusters (inflorescences) supported by a rosette of small leaves.

Medicinal use

The root of *umarhedeni* is poisonous but is very effective in the treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STI's), collectively called *ukubhajwa*. The preparation of the medicine is very important. The boiling decoction of the root must be cooled and reheated ten times to ensure that the medicine is ready for use. It is important to administer the correct dosage once correctly prepared. A cup of the medicine is filled to the level of the first joint of the index finger. Any more than this could be fatal. The medicine is administered as an enema.



51. *Umsolo* – *Scabiosa columbaria* (Wild Scabiosa)

A grassland herb up to 1 m high. The erect, seldom branched stems grow from a circular cluster of leaves at the base of the stem which is sometimes toothed or lobed. Flowers are compact, 25 mm–35 mm in diameter and pink and sometimes white in colour.

Medicinal use

In Pondoland it is believed that exposure (*ukwelama*) to evil spirits may cause a body rash called *umsolo*, similar to that caused by allergies. One such evil spirit is called *ichanti* and sometimes called *inyoka yabafazi*, literally meaning 'women's snake'. *Inyoka yabafazi* is believed to be a familiar of a witch kept secretly by witches. The snake is hidden by wrapping it around the waste, but will cause a terrible rash on any person who accidentally sees it. Another cause of serious rash is exposure to a certain forest tree called *uthovane* that is believed to be a spirit. Unless something is done to please the spirit (*ukucamagusha*) immediately, the tree will inflict a rash. Rashes can also be caused by drinking or washing in polluted water or eating certain foods. A decoction of the leaves of the *umsolo* plant is used as a wash to treat all skin rashes despite their cause. *Umsolo* means a 'skin rash' or 'allergic reaction on the skin.'



52. *Unozixhekana* – *Aster bakerianus* (Baker's Aster)

A perennial herb found in open grassland that grows up to 500 mm tall. It grows in scattered colonies. The stems and the leaves which are sometimes toothed are hairy. The purplish-blue flowers are single and carried at the top of the stems.

Medicinal use

A decoction of *unozixhekana* is used by adults, in the form of an enema, to treat lower back pain (*isingqe*), epileptic fits and a condition called *umkhondo*. The most common symptoms of *umkhondo*, also called *indlela*, are sleepy eyes and drowsiness throughout the day (refer to plant No. 20). The name *unozixhekana* is derived from the habit of the spreading, tuberous roots that resemble peanut or potato tubers.



53. *Isihlungu semamba* – *Ursinia tenuiloba* (*Ursinia*) *umkhondo*

A perennial herb up to 300 mm tall that grows in small scattered populations. The leaves at the base are about 50 mm long and are finely divided into narrow lobes. The single flowering heads are carried at the top of stems of about 150 mm long. The flowering heads are about 40 mm across and each yellow floret has a green or red central stripe. The fruits have white papery wings attached.

Medicinal use

A decoction of the leaves and stem is taken internally to treat snake bite. It is believed that the mamba eats this herb immediately after biting a human and it is therefore important that a person, who has been bitten, should also take the medicine as soon as possible after the incident occurred.

Isihlungu semamba is mixed with other snake-bite medicines such as *ishongwe* (*Pachycarpus* sp.) and *umayime* (*Clivia robusta* – plant No. 9).



This mixture of herbs, called *izihlungu*, is also used to treat stomach cramps caused by eating poisoned meat, for example of an animal that was bitten and killed by a snake. The name given to snake venom is *isihlungu*. *Isihlungu semamba* derives from *ubuhlungu*, meaning 'an antidote' and *imamba*, 'a poisonous snake.'



54. Umdubu – *Combretum kraussii* (Forest Bushwillow)

A large tree up to 25 m tall that grows in forests. The bark is pale to dark grey-brown becoming rough in older trees. Leaves are up to 90 mm long and 50 mm wide and are opposite, elliptic and leathery with the veins raised on the lower leaf surface. Leaves turn red in winter and are white in spring, coinciding with flowering and later turning green. Leaves may drop during dry winters. Flowers are creamy-white in colour and carried in dense spikes. The four-winged fruits turn from brown to red when ripe.

Medicinal use

The main use of the roots is for internal cleansing, such as the treatment of sexually transmitted infections (*ukubhajwa*) for example. The roots are also used in *imbiza yokugeqa* (medicine for cleansing the womb when a woman wants to fall pregnant) and in *imbiza emnyama* (black medicine) which are used to remove 'pollution' from the body. After using this medicine it is believed that the mother-to-be will conceive easily because the baby 'will sit in a clean place.' This herbal medicine is administered by means of an enema and thereafter a teaspoonful is taken twice daily in the morning and again in the evening.



55. *Uvelabahleke, Umqathani* – *Rothmannia globosa* (September Bells)

A small tree up to 10 m tall growing in forest and along forest margins. The stem is straight and the bark is covered in fine cracks. The leaves are up to 100 mm long and 40 mm wide. When the leaf is held up to the sunlight the veins can be seen clearly. The white, bell-shaped flowers are sweetly scented and the fruits are round, about 25 mm across.

Medicinal use

A preparation of the roots and bark is used as a wash to change the attitude of an opponent in a positive way. True to its name, the charm medicine ensures that any person, who is angry with the user, will simply smile and laugh when he or she appears. It is believed that *uvelabahleke* will ensure positive results in a job application or request for promotion at work. In this case the charm medicine is mixed with a commercially available synthetic product called *ilitye labeLungu* ('white man's stone') that is bought from *ikhemisti* (chemist). *Ukuvela* means 'to appear' and *ukuhleka* means 'to laugh,' referring to the ability of the medicine to influence the attitude of an angry or unfriendly person causing him or her to smile or laugh.



56. *Imfingo* – *Stangeria eriopus* (Stangeria)

This is a cone-bearing stemless plant up to 1.5 m high that grows in grassland and forest. Male and female cones are on separate plants. Plants growing in the forest are much larger than those found in grassland. *Imfingo* is sometimes confused with *umguza* (Cycad, *Encephalartos* species) because they look similar.

Medicinal use

The underground stem is cut into slices, dried in the sun and then crushed into powder. The powder is given to animals in dry powdered form (*ukukhumisa*) as a preventative against disease and sickness. Livestock, sheep in particular, are susceptible to *inyongo* (excess bile in the gall bladder sometimes caused by heartwater disease) when they are allowed out of the kraal before the dew has dried on the grass. The eating of this wet grass is believed to be the main cause of *inyongo* which can be prevented and treated with *imfingo*. The condition is most common on the coastal grasslands of Pondoland.



57. *Isisefo* – *Faurea macnaughtonii* (Terblanz Beech)

A tall tree that grows up to 25 m tall and found in forests and scrubland. This is the tallest member of the Protea family (examples of other Proteas include *isiqwane* and *isiqalaba*). Young leaves are often red and narrow while mature leaves are broader and usually curved backwards with a wavy margin and reddish stalks. The stem is straight with deeply grooved bark. Cream coloured flowers are carried in hanging spikes and are followed by hairy fruits.

Medicinal use

The most common cause of food poisoning, sometimes accidental and sometimes intentional, is through eating rotten meat. A decoction of the bark, mixed with bark of *umdoni* (Water Berry, *Syzygium cordatum*) and *umkhupathi* (Red Beech, *Protorhus longifolia*), is taken to treat this kind of poisoning. Sometimes these trees are called *umthi wenyama*, meaning 'medicine for meat.' *Isisefo* refers to the many tiny holes in the bark that make the bark look like a sieve or strainer (*isefu*).



58. *Umbinda* – *Garcinia gerrardii* (Forest Mangosteen)

A tree up to 20 m tall found in forests and along forest margins. The small branches are clearly angled and all parts of the tree bleed a milky latex-like sap when cut or broken. The shiny, dark-green leaves are arranged in opposite pairs. The new spring leaves are bronze in colour. Cream coloured flowers are followed by large green fruits containing shiny brown seeds. The bark is mottled yellow. *Umbinda* often has *indembu* (Mistletoe, *Viscum rotundifolium*) growing in it, forming yellowish clumps among the branches.

Medicinal use

It is used to treat people who have a condition called *umbilini* (anxiety or panic attack) brought on by fear or phobia. One such phobia is that of lightning, partly because of the physical danger it presents, but also because many people believe that lightning is a manifestation of evil forces. A decoction of the bark is used as a purge to treat *umbilini*. Another related use of *umbinda* is as a protective charm against lightning strikes. Four sticks, called *amakhwenkwe* (literally meaning 'boys'), are prepared by a traditional healer (*inyanga*) and placed in the ground at the four corners of the homestead at the onset of a storm to protect the home against lightning strikes. After the storm the sticks are removed and kept safely to be used again. These *amakhwenkwe* may only be handled by old people.



59. *Amasethole* – *Manilkara nicholsonii* (Pondo Milkberry)

A rare Pondoland Centre endemic that grows up to 20 m tall in dry forest. The stem is often branched low down and has greyish furrowed bark. The tree bears white flowers produced in large numbers, but only a few flowers survive the parasites that cause noticeable woody galls on the branches. The few fruits, about 30 mm long and 20 mm wide, are green in colour and change to orange when ripe.

Medicinal use

Amasethole is one of the medicines that are used to treat poisoning from rotten meat (refer to plant No. 57). The dry taste of the plant indicates that it is good for treating stomach cramps and is indeed commonly used for this. Men carve sticks (*iqakatha*, and *ubhoko*) from the wood which are used for traditional stick fighting (*umdlalo weentonga*) and for personal protection. *Amasethole* is a *hlonipha* (taboo) name that may not be said aloud in the forest as it is believed that a leopard will appear before you and you will be in great danger. *Amasethole* derives from *amasi*, meaning 'sour milk,' and *ithole*, meaning 'calf,' referring to the milky sap of the tree.



60. *Isikhafulo samabhungu*, *Uphuma-aphele* – *Helinus integrifolius* (Soap creeper)

A woody climber found in forests and bush clumps. The stems are reddish brown and the pale green leaves are alternately arranged with the petiole attached on the bottom of the leaf. White flowers develop from leaf axils, followed by round green fruits which turn black when ripe.

Medicinal use

This is one of several popular charm medicines used by young men when seeking the affections of young women. This particular plant is used to drive competitors away. The roots are soaked in cold water and then stirred quickly (*ukuphehla*) to cause the water to foam. The foam is sipped and then spat out forcefully while the name of the opponent is called out loudly at the same time. This practice ensures that the rival's advances will be rejected. *Isikhafulo samabhungu* derives from *ukukhafula*, meaning 'to ritually spit' or 'spray medicine from the mouth,' and *amabhungu* meaning 'young unmarried men.' *Uphuma-aphele* derives from *phuma*, meaning 'get out,' and *uphele* meaning 'permanently.'



Glossary

Aril – a fleshy growth on a seed.

Bulb scales – fleshy parts of a bulb, like an onion.

Capsules – a dry fruit with seeds in it. *Isingxobo sembewu*.

Corm – solid underground storage part of some plants such as *igwaqani*. *Isidumbe*.

Curse – cause of misfortune. *Isiqalekiso*.

Deciduous – trees that lose their leaves seasonally. *Amagqabi avuthulukayo*.

Elliptic – broadest in the middle and narrower at each end (leaf shape).

Emetic – a medicine that induces vomiting. *Iyeza lokugabhisa*.

Erectile problems – impotence. *Ubunyumba*.

Inflorescence – group or cluster of flowers arranged on a stem.

Lax – arranged loosely, not compact.

Liana – woody climbing vine. *Isityalo esithile esiphingelayo*.

Lobed – division of segment of a leaf.

Margin – edge of a leaf.

Meconium – earliest faeces of an infant.

Metaphysical – supernatural. *Amandla angaphezulu kwawemvelo*.

Naturalized – plants introduced from elsewhere, now established.

Perennial – a plant that lives three or more years.

Petiole – a leaf stalk.

Pioneer – the first plants to colonize a disturbed area.

Poultice – soft, wet paste applied as a medicine.

Prostrate – lying flat on the ground.

Purging – cleansing the stomach by means of an enema and an emetic.

Ray floret – petal like part of a composite flower.

Resprouting – plants that are able to re-grow after being burnt or chopped off at the base.

Rhizome – horizontal underground stem.

Rosette – dense cluster of leaves from a central point.

Sedge – a group of plants that look like grasses, but have square stems and spirally arranged leaves, for example Nut-grass.

Sepals – a segment of a calyx.

Spathe – a bract around or enclosing an inflorescence.

Spike – a long unbranched inflorescence.

Tendrils – a twining tip that grasps support for climbing.

Isibambelelo.

Terminal – at the tip or end of the branch.

Trifoliate – a leaf with three leaflets.

Undulate – wavy. *Namafongqofongqo*.

Venation – the pattern of veins on a leaf.



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Sinegugu Zukulu was born and brought up in Pondoland. As a young boy, while looking after cattle, he collected and enjoyed an abundance of wild fruit of the many endemic plants and carried sticks cut from Pondoland trees. He was sent out into the wild regularly to collect specific herbs used for certain cultural or ritual practices. Today in his work for South Africa's National Department of Environmental Affairs and as Director of a Section 21 eco-social enterprise called Sustaining the Wild Coast, Sinegugu Zukulu's mission is to raise awareness amongst South Africans and in particular his people, the amaPondo, of the unique biodiversity of the Pondoland region. Mr Zukulu was responsible for capturing the knowledge of the four herbalists who contributed to this book and for writing up all the species accounts.



Sinegugu Zukulu

Tony Dold is a plant taxonomist and ethnobotanist at Rhodes University and is the Curator of the Selmar Schonland Herbarium. He has an interest and passion for documenting how South Africa's biodiversity is profoundly reflected in the language, stories, poetry, religious rituals, healing practices and everyday customs that define the culture of South Africa's people. Tony Dold was responsible for editing and collating the text for this book.



Tony Dold

Tony Abbott has been working on the vegetation of the Pondoland Centre of Endemism for 30 years in a close association with Prof. A.E. van Wyk of the H.G.W.J. Schweickerdt Herbarium, Department of Plant Science, University of Pretoria. As a resident in the area he undertakes veld excursions weekly and has discovered a host of new plant species that occur only in Pondoland. Mr Tony Abbott provided the botanical identifications and plant descriptions for this book.



Tony Abbott

Domitilla Raimondo is the Manager of the Threatened Species Programme at the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI). She works on monitoring and assessing the status of South Africa's plant species and is passionate about the conservation of indigenous plants and about creating awareness of South Africa's unique plant diversity. Domitilla Raimondo coordinated the production of this booklet.



Domitilla Raimondo





ISBN 978-1-919976-71-6



9 781919 976716

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