

Crossopteryx febrifuga  
(RUBIACEAE)

NOMENCLATURE:

Accepted Name: Crossopteryx febrifuga (Afzel. ex G. Don) Benth.

Approved by:

References: See Bibliography\*

Synonyms: Crossopteryx kotschyana Fenzl  
C. africana (Winterb.) K. Schum.  
Rondeletia febrifuga Afzel. ex G. Don  
R. africana Winterb.

Identification:

FRACTIONATOR:

DESCRIPTION: Shrub or small tree up to 30 feet high, often crooked and gnarled, with straggling branches from near the base that are sometimes pendulous. Bark pale grey to brown with small crumbly scales. Slash salmon-pink. Wood purple-grey, pinkish or brown. Twigs and young foliage velvety or glabrous. Leaves variable, elliptic-obovate or ovate-suborbicular; usually widest above the middle, abruptly acuminate or rounded at apex, base broadly cuneate to rounded, 2-1/2 - 4-1/2 inches long and 1-1/2 - 3 inches broad; with 5-6 pairs of prominently upcurving lateral nerves fading out near the margin, the veins form an irregular network; petiole 0.2-0.5 inches long. Flowers nauseously scented, creamy-white, tinged with pink on the corolla tube, in dense terminal pendulous cymes or corymbose panicles, 5-merous; calyx very small; corolla with a narrow tube about .25 inch long; stamens shortly exserted; style long-exserted, slender with an ellipsoid or pinhead stigma. Fruits red or violet turning black, a 2-valved globose capsule splitting from the apex, persistent, with the remains of the calyx forming a circular disk at the apex, about 0.4 inches in diameter. Seeds two, thin, flat, black, about 0.1 inch across, surrounded by a membranous frill or with a narrow jagged wing.

ECOLOGY: Edges of deciduous forest, savanna, and thickets. Often frequent or abundant, particularly in forest-savanna mosaics at elevations below 5,000 feet. Its occurrence possibly correlates with savanna vegetation that has been recently derived from forests.

Flowers January-July; fruits January, June, October.

COMMENTS: A monotypic genus and probably most abundant in the Guinea savanna countries.

Noted by Spjut from specimens collected in the Shimba Hills as a frequent shrub in savanna-like places. Collected at the site where most of M. buchananii was obtained.

Active from Ghana.

USES: A well-known medicinal plant, especially as a febrifuge. Also used for treating coughs, gastro-intestinal pains, skin diseases, swellings, diarrhoea, dysentery, gonorrhoea, worms, colds, chicken pox, scabies, constipation. Its uses are cited from many African countries - Ivory Coast, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Sudan, Malawi, Tanzania and Rhodesia. The stem bark is almost consistently the part of the plant selected. Also used as an ordeal poison.

Active agent are alkaloids - crossopterine and crossoptine.

Not listed in Hartwell's "Plants Used Against Cancer."

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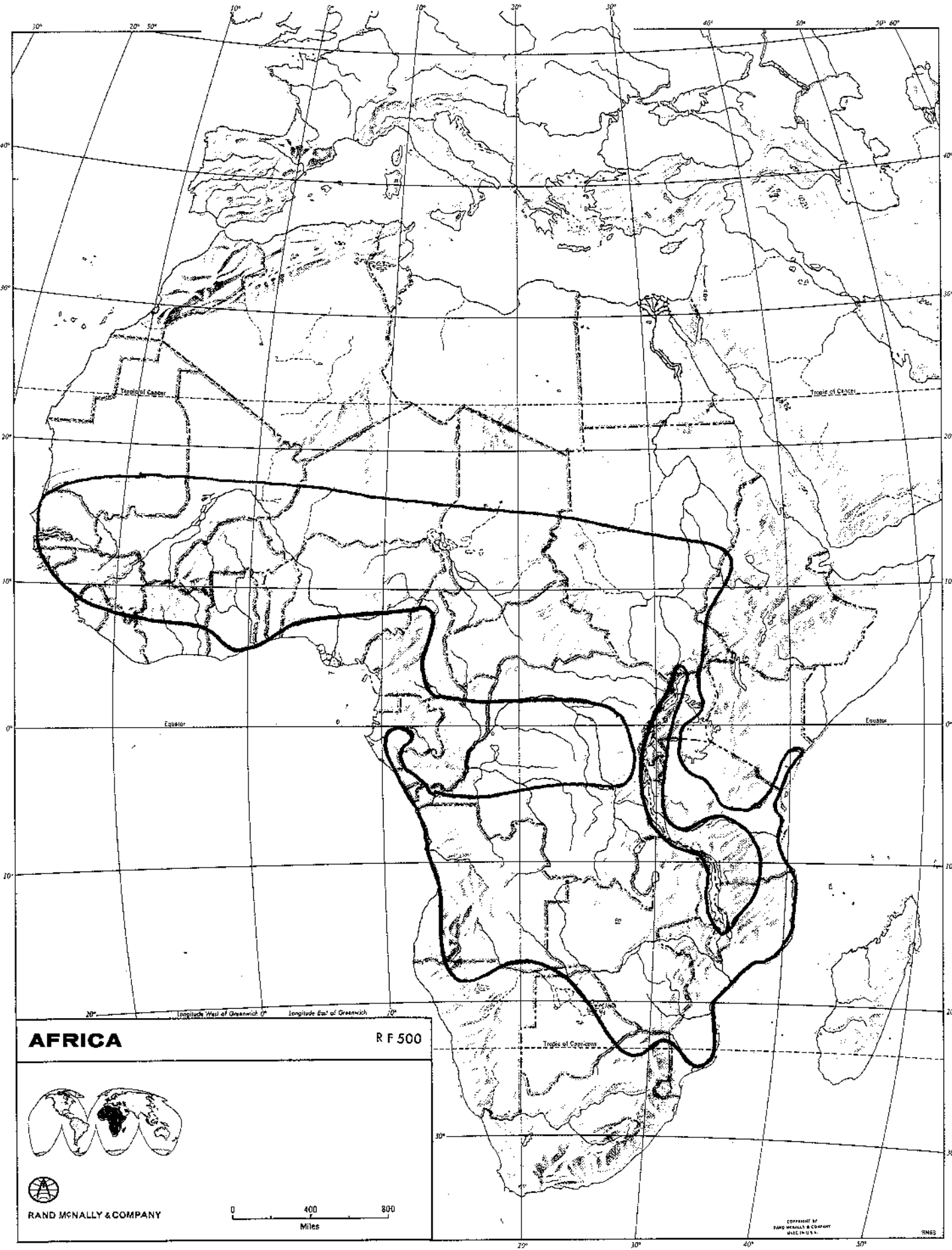
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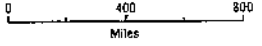
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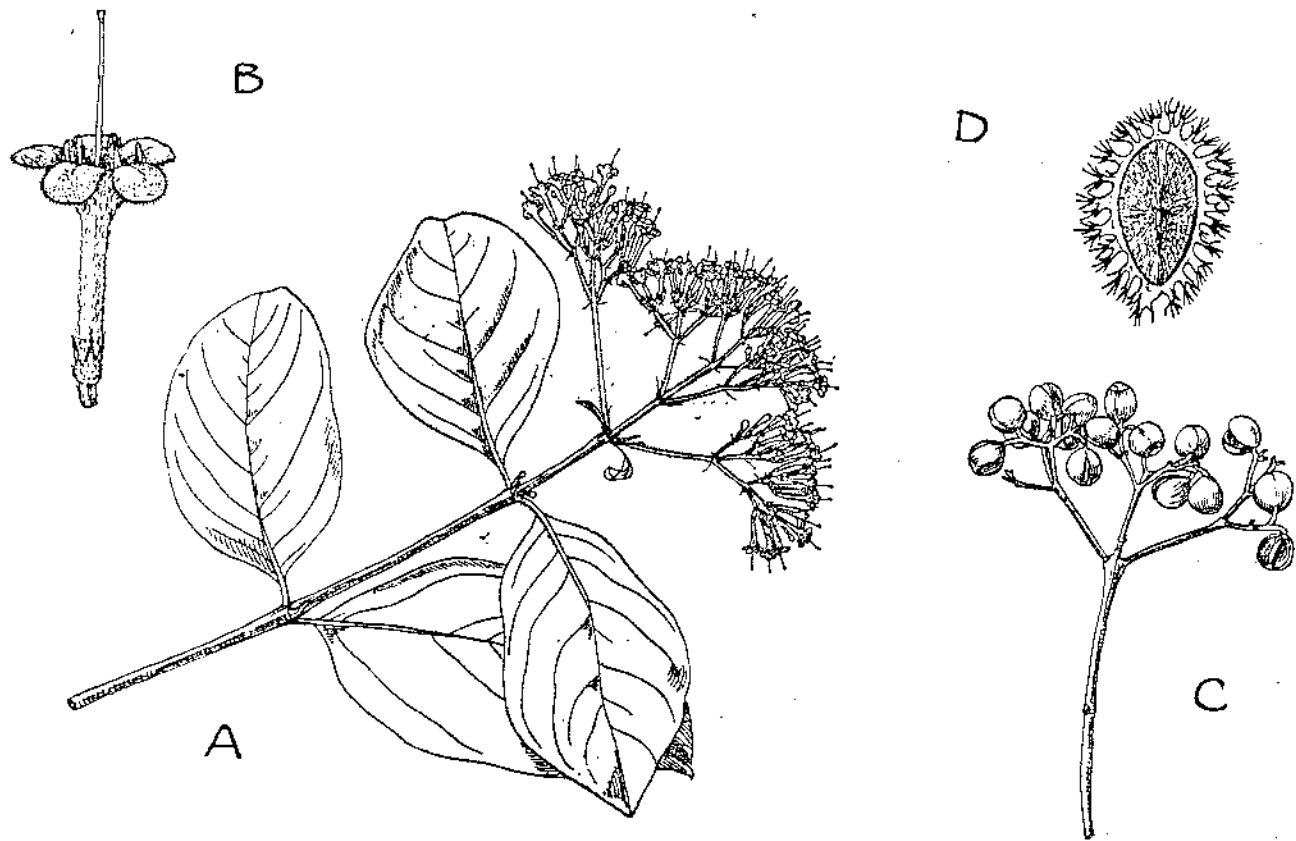


Fig. 172—*CROSSOPTERYX FEBRIFUGA*  
A, flowering shoot,  $\times \frac{3}{8}$ . B, flower,  $\times 3$ . C, fruits,  $\times \frac{3}{8}$ . D, seed,  $\times 7$ .