

Vegetation of the Cuvelai-Etoshia Basin

- Cuvelai drainage
- Etosha grass and dwarf shrubland
- Karstveld woodlands
- Mopane shrubland
- North-eastern Kalahari woodlands
- Pans
- Western Kalahari woodlands
- Kunene valley

Major vegetation types in the Basin

The structure and composition of the 8 major vegetation types is largely determined by the underlying soil, topography and rainfall.

Much of the natural plant cover has been cleared for cultivation or to build homes or by grazing in the densely populated areas.



Mopane shrubland is dominated by short mopane trees and shrubs.



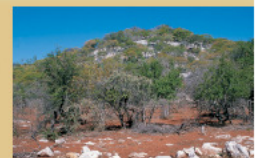
Etosha grass and dwarf shrubland is an important grazing resource for many of the large mammals in Etosha.



Pans: Only a few grasses and small shrubs grow on these very salty soils.



The Karstveld woodlands consist largely of medium-sized trees with rather sparse grass cover.



Kunene valley: The wooded slopes leading down to the Kunene River.

Western Kalahari woodlands: Most trees are broad-leaved in this large area of short, but dense savanna.



North-eastern Kalahari woodlands: consist of dense, tall savanna interspersed with small pans.



Cuvelai drainage: The *iishana* channels are grass-covered while palms and mopane trees and shrubs grow on the higher ground.

The uses of plants

No other plant is as useful and symbolic to the Basin as the mopane or *omusati*. It supplies such goods and services as browse for livestock, mopane worms, gum used as a sealant, traditional medicines, roots for export, bark for tanning, building materials for houses and kraals, and rope to bind giant grain storage baskets.



In recent years, the commercialisation of some plant products in the Basin, such as oils from marula and kakukuru seed kernels, has allowed residents to earn new cash incomes. This income can have substantial impacts on rural livelihoods and is typically used to pay school fees, medical expenses, and to buy food and household essentials. It has also motivated people to protect mature fruit trees and cultivate new ones.



Mopane roots are exported for use in the tropical fish trade as aquarium ornaments.



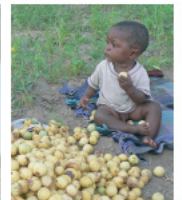
Eembe, the tasty fruits of Ombe trees, are a popular food.



Oils are extracted from Kakukuru fruits for use in cosmetics.



Palm trees provide many products and benefits, including shade from the heat of the day.



Marula fruits provide food and drinks, and oil from the seed kernels.

The abuses of plants



Even after good rain and grass growth the effects of overgrazing are clear, shown here by the difference between grass cover inside and outside Ogongo College where there is little grazing.



Grasses, shrubs and trees provide food for hundreds of thousands of cattle, goats and donkeys in the Basin. However, most of the forage for these animals is in the commonages which are not managed. As a result it is in everyone's individual

interests to have as many animals as possible and to use as much forage as possible. This is not sustainable as the vegetation becomes more and more degraded over the years.

The border between the Basin in Namibia and Angola is one of the few international boundaries that can be seen from space. This is because the Namibian side has been so badly deforested.

